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HILDA-JOHNSTONE STORIES OF GREECE & ROME 1925

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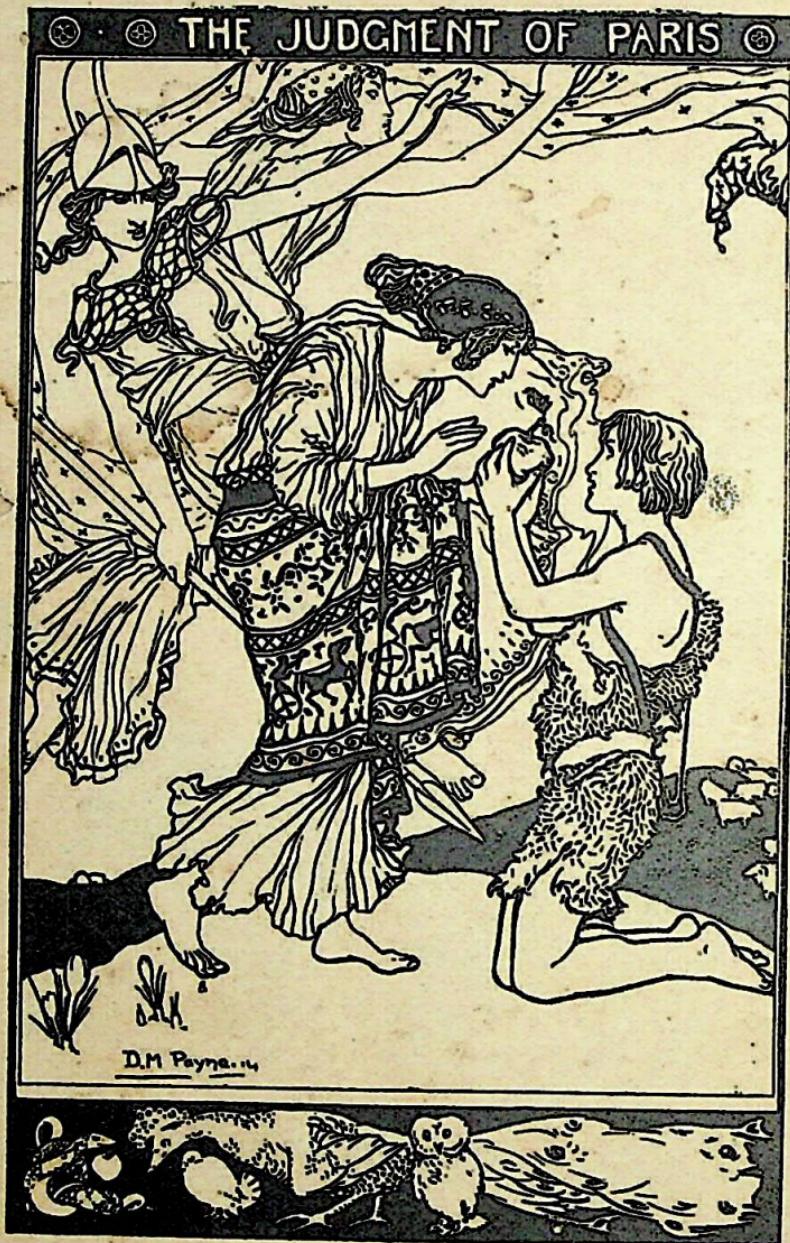
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STORIES OF GREECE AND ROME



BY HILDA JOHNSTONE

LONGMANS
39 PATERNOSTER ROW
BOMBAY-CALCUTTA

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INTRODUCTION

Monsieur Paul Sabatier once wrote that "love is the only real key to history." It is in the hope of putting that key into the hands of twentieth-century children that this little book has been written.

History is not an easy subject either to learn or to teach. It may become a burden instead of a joy. We may be so busy insisting on its importance that we forget to explain its fascination. Facts may remain sheer facts, instead of becoming, as they ought, "the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain."

The present collection of stories is meant to serve as an introduction to fact, through fiction. The twelve tales it contains are all time-honoured. There is no reason why they should not delight English children as they delighted two of the greatest nations the world has ever seen. Legendary as their incidents and characters are, they are so famous that they may almost claim to be a part of history.

The stories have been told as simply as possible, and all unnecessary names omitted.

H. J.

A GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

IN the following list the accent ' shows where the stress falls. The mark - shows that the vowel is a long one. Vowels not marked are short. In a few cases, where the stress falls on a short vowel, the mark ^ has been added as a warning not to lengthen the vowel because it is stressed. The diphthongs *æ* and *œ* are pronounced like *e* in *eel* : *eu* like *u* in *use*.

Ach-ill'-ēs	Hē'-cuba
Æ-nē'-as	Hē'-ra
A-ga-mém-nōn	Hérm'-ēs
Al-lēct'-ō	Hes-pēr'-i-a
A-mūl-i-us	Hor-ā'-ti-us
An-chīs'-ēs	Īl'-i-ad
An-drō'-mach-ē	Īth'-a-ca
Aph-ro-dit'-ē	Lā-ōc'-o-ōn
Ār'-uns	La-tīn'-us
A-thēn'-ē	Lu-crēt'-i-a
Bri-sē'-is	Men-e-lā'-us
Chry-sē'-is	Nū'-mi-tor
Cir-cē	O-dýs'-seus
Clōe-li-a	Pat-rō'-clus
Col-la-tīn'-us	Pen-ē'-lop-e
Cre-ū'-sa	Per-sēph'-o-nē
Cy'-clōps (singular)	Pol-y-dōr'-us
Cy-clōp'-es (plural)	Pol-y-phēm'-us
Dē'-los	Por-sen'-na
Dē-mēt'-ēr	Rōm'-u-lus
Dr'-do	Rē'-mus
Eu-mæ'-us	Scæ'-vo-la
Eur-ȳ'-loch-us	Tel-ē'-mach-us

N.B.—A few well-known names (e.g. Cy'clōps, Rōm'ulus, Pen'lope) are given in customary instead of strictly accurate form (Cyclōps, Rōmulus, Pēnēlopē).

STORIES OF GREECE

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I

PARIS THE FIREBRAND

“Of old, unhappy, far-off things
And battles long ago.”

WORDSWORTH.

FAR, far away, and long, long ago, there was a great city called Troy. It stood in rich country, at a spot so famous that already five cities had been built there. One by one they had fallen into ruin and been forgotten. The sixth, too, was to pass away, but before it perished such gallant deeds were done there that its name will live for all ages.

No one could have guessed that danger was at hand. The city looked so fine and strong, with its towers and terraces and palaces. All day its bright streets were crowded. Traders and travellers went in and out of its gates. The fresh sea breezes blew upon it, and the sun shone gaily. Men's hearts were glad within them. Priam rejoiced as he looked upon his kingdom.

Priam was the King of Troy. He was proud

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of that, and proud, too, of his fair wife, Hecuba, and of the family of tall sons who were growing up.

Now Priam and Hecuba hoped for another son. But one night, as Hecuba lay sleeping, she had a dreadful dream, and woke in a fright. She had dreamt that instead of a baby a firebrand was born, and that she saw it, all flaming, set fire to Troy. The dream was so vivid that she could not forget it. She was sure it had come to warn her of trouble. She must try to think of a way of escape.

By and by a baby son was born. Instead of being pleased, Hecuba was terrified.

"The dream is coming true," she said to her husband. "Ruin will come upon us if this child lives."

"Would you kill your own son?" said Priam.

"No," said Hecuba. "But let us carry him to the mountains, and leave him there. If he is indeed my son, the gods will care for him. But if he is this evil thing that is to ruin us, we shall have done well to get rid of him."

So they took the baby and left it on the mountain slopes. There were wild beasts, and storms, and terrors of all kinds. But the baby was too tiny to know of them. For a long time it slept, but by and by it waked, and cried a little, because it was cold and hungry.

Now there were shepherds on the mountain-side, tending their sheep. They heard the cry,

PARIS THE FIREBRAND

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no louder than the bleat of a frightened lamb, and came hurrying to see what it was. When they found the child, they were astonished. But they had kind hearts, and one of them carried the little thing home to his wife.

The boy grew up, then, among the shepherds. They called him Paris. He did not know who he was, and was quite content to lead the hardworking life of the shepherds. All day long he was out in the sun and wind, running and leaping among the crags. All night long he slept in the cool mountain air. He grew tall and strong and beautiful, till all men wondered to see so lovely a boy.

It was because he was so handsome that by and by the gods chose him to do a very difficult thing. He was to decide which of three goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite, and Athene, was the fairest. Whichever he chose would have the prize of beauty, a golden apple.

It was not an easy choice for a simple shepherd boy. All three seemed to him more wonderful than anything he had ever seen before.

Hera, the queen of heaven, was proud and dignified. Sometimes she rode through the air in a chariot drawn by peacocks. Her veil, spangled with stars, streamed out behind her. To-day she stood alone on the mountain slope, unattended, unadorned, and yet a queen indeed.

Athene, grey-eyed Athene as the Greeks

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called her, was quite different. Paris thought her very beautiful, with her calm, serious look.

But when he turned to the third, he was more puzzled than ever. For Aphrodite was as lovely as spring itself. It seemed to Paris, as he looked at her, that the air was full of the perfume of roses and myrtle. And he heard the flutter of wings, as though the snow-white doves who drew her chariot were flying softly round her, all unseen.

Now each of the goddesses wanted to be chosen. When they saw that Paris was silent, they began to tempt him.

"Am I not the fairest, good youth?" said Hera. "Make me your choice, and you shall have power and glory."

"Nay," said Athene. "Let the prize be mine. He who is favoured by the warrior-maid shall win renown in battle. He shall live in honour and die splendidly."

"If you choose me," said Aphrodite, "you shall have the fairest wife in Greece."

To the simple shepherd this last seemed the best gift. He hardly understood what the others meant. So he put the apple into Aphrodite's hand, and she went happy away. But Hera and Athene were angry. They told him he had chosen badly, and that some day he would repent it. And, as you will see, they were right.

Meantime, at Troy, King Priam was making ready for a great festival. People long ago

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used to make sacrifices to the gods on feast days. The animals which were offered up had to be the finest that could be found. If they were sickly, or ugly, or old, it was thought that the gods would not like them.

So King Priam called two of his sons to him. "I want you to go up into the mountains," he said. "I am sure, if you look well, you can find some splendid creatures there worth offering to the gods."

The two brothers set out. Sure enough, when they got into the mountains, one of them spied a beautiful bull. "Look, my brother," he said, "is not this just such a creature, strong, fine, and young, as we are seeking?" The other agreed. They caught the bull, and drove it off towards the city.

Now the bull belonged to Paris. When they had got some distance Paris saw them from the hills. "Robbers!" he shouted. As fast as he could he began to run after them, calling to them to give back his bull.

The brothers paid no heed, and reached the city gate. But Paris followed, crying that he would ask for justice, if he had to go to the King himself.

You may guess what happened next. The King had not talked long to Paris before the whole story came out. "This is our son!" cried Priam. "The gods have saved him to come back to us." The Queen herself, when she saw how beautiful her son had grown, was glad to

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forget her dream. Paris was taken into the palace and dressed in fine clothes. His brothers welcomed him. He enjoyed the new life, and began to forget about his hard work on the mountains. He even forgot the promise made him by Aphrodite.

But Aphrodite had not forgotten. One day she appeared again before Paris, to remind him.

"Where shall I seek this wife?" he asked.

"You must take ship," she said, "and sail away to the westward. By and by you will come to the fair land of Hellas. There she dwells."

So there came a day when Paris took with him his dearest friends, and said good-bye to his father and mother, and set sail for Hellas. Hellas was the land which we call Greece. One of its greatest cities was Sparta.

Now in Sparta there ruled a king called Menelaus. His queen, Helen, was the most beautiful woman you can imagine. No one could look at her without loving her. As soon as he set eyes on her Paris thought, "This must be the lady the goddess meant. How lucky I shall be if I may indeed marry her!"

Menelaus received Paris kindly. He was glad to see a stranger and to hear news from across the sea. Paris had brought fine presents with him. He gave them to Helen, and told her wonderful stories of the land from which they had come. She began to long to see all the fine things he talked about.

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By and by Menelaus had to go away, many days' journey over the sea. He left Paris and Helen behind.

Then Paris persuaded Helen to leave her home and come back with him to Troy. They took what they could find, and stole off in the dark. The ship was waiting. The wind filled the sails. The deck began to sway. They were off into the night and the wind.

Never had Paris had so terrible a journey. The gods were watching, and were angry with him. Hera vowed she would punish him. She called up a great storm. The lightning flashed terribly. There were peals of thunder. Every moment it seemed as if the ship would sink. Great waves dashed against her sides.

But Paris was to escape this time. Wet, and weary, and frightened, he reached Troy at last. He led Helen through the gates to his mother. "Here is my bride," he said. "Love her as you love me."

Priam and Hecuba were delighted. "The dream can have meant nothing," they said, "Paris is a good son to us, and now he has brought us the fairest maid in Greece to be his wife." There was a fine wedding. Paris began to think all was to go well.

Meanwhile, of course, messengers had gone to Menelaus to tell him what had happened. He hurried home and consulted his friends as to what he should do.

"You must go with an army," they said, "and

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bring her back by force. And in revenge for what Paris has done you must make war upon his city, Troy, and upon his friends, the Trojans, and blot them out from the face of the earth."

So Menelaus began to make ready. All the bravest men in Greece came to join him. There was Achilles, for example, the great warrior : and Odysseus, the craftiest and cleverest of all the Greeks : and Agamemnon, Menelaus' brother. More than a thousand ships were needed to carry all these heroes.

They set sail, and, after some troubles and mistakes, landed safely on the coast by Troy. The Trojans took refuge behind the walls. So the Greeks had to encamp outside and try to starve them out.

For nine long years the fight went on. But in the tenth Troy fell. The Greeks set fire to it. So it was true, as Hecuba had dreamt, that her son Paris would be a firebrand, the ruin of the city where he had been born.

II

THE FIGHT FOR HELEN

“ I had great beauty : ask not thou my name.
No one can be more wise than destiny.
Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came
I brought calamity.”

TENNYSON.

THERE are a great many famous stories told about those ten years during which Troy was besieged. The Greeks themselves were proud of what their forefathers had done. They never tired of hearing the same tales told over and over again.

By and by a poem was made up about this. Afterwards other poets used to recite this poem, each adding something of his own to it. In the end enough stories were written to make quite a thick book. It was called the “Iliad.” It used to be thought that one poet, named Homer, had written it all.

One of the heroes about whom the Greeks liked to hear was named Achilles. He and his great friend, Patroclus, were always among the

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bravest whenever there was a chance of fighting. The Greeks could not get inside Troy, but they were able to roam about the country near. Several small towns fell into their hands. Whatever plunder they got they shared out amongst those who had done the fighting.

One day, after an adventure of this sort, among the prisoners taken there were two beautiful girls. Their names were Chryseis and Briseis. Chryseis was given to Agamemnon, and Briseis to Achilles.

Now Chryseis was the daughter of a priest. When her father heard what had happened, he hurried to the Greek camp and begged Agamemnon to set her free. He was willing to pay anything if only he could have his child again. But Agamemnon mocked at him and would not listen.

Then the priest was very angry. He prayed to the gods whom he served, and asked them to punish Agamemnon. His prayer was heard, and a plague began to rage in the Greek camp. Many died.

Agamemnon never suspected the reason of this. However, he grew very anxious. By and by he sent for a wise old man, and asked him why this trouble had come, and why the gods were angry.

The old man knew perfectly well, but hardly dared say. He got Achilles to promise to protect him if Agamemnon was angry. When Achilles had promised, the old man said: "O

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King, the gods are angry because you drove forth their priest and keep his daughter prisoner. Restore Chryseis, and they will cease to punish you."

Agamemnon dared not refuse. But he believed that it was Achilles who, through jealousy, had made the old man give this advice. "I will give back Chryseis," he said. "Let her go to her father. But I will have in her stead Briseis. If I am robbed, Achilles shall be robbed too."

Now Agamemnon was general of the whole army, so his word was law. Briseis was fetched from Achilles' tent and given to Agamemnon.

But Achilles was furiously angry. "So be it," he cried. "Take the girl. But, since you have put this shame upon me, seek my help no longer. Call not upon Achilles when you go forth to battle."

So Achilles went sulkily back to his tent, and stayed there. Of course all his men followed his example.

The Trojans soon found out that the Greeks had lost Achilles' help. They grew bolder. Hector, Priam's son, led them in one sally after another. Many Greek leaders were wounded. The victorious Trojans surrounded the camp. The besiegers were now the besieged.

Although the Greeks were in such danger, Achilles refused to make up the quarrel. In vain Agamemnon offered to give back Briseis and to make splendid presents besides. Achilles

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hugged his grievance, and would not listen to reason. Even his friend Patroclus could not persuade him.

At last Patroclus had an idea. Achilles had a suit of wonderful armour, which had been made by the gods themselves.

"If you will not yourself lead us out to battle," said Patroclus, "lend me your armour and your men. I will be their leader. We shall save the camp, and yet you will not have broken your word."

Achilles agreed, and Patroclus put on the famous armour, and called the men to follow him. When the Trojans saw the new-comers, and saw the armour they had learnt to dread, they were dismayed, and took to flight. Patroclus was so delighted and so eager, that he followed them right up to the city wall.

But now the Trojans were within reach of safety. Besides, Patroclus had run faster than his men, and there was no one near to help him. The Trojans turned round and made a stand. In single combat with Hector, Patroclus was slain. When the Greeks came up to the rescue, all they could do was to recover his dead body. Hector had stripped it of the armour, which he bore off into the city.

Then the Greeks went back, sorrowing, bearing their slain comrade. When Achilles heard the news he was filled with remorse. He made his peace with Agamemnon and hastily made ready to avenge his friend. There must be no

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more sulking. He must destroy Hector as Hector had destroyed Patroclus.

Meantime, inside the city, Hector was telling the tale of his success. Yet, with all his pleasure in the victory, his heart was heavy. Something told him there was trouble near at hand. When the time came for going forth again, his wife, Andromache, clung to him and begged him not to go.

"Nay," he said, "I am the leader. I must go for Troy's sake, come what may."

"Say, rather, I must stay for my child's sake," cried Andromache. Weeping, she held up his baby son.

Hector tried to soothe her fears, but he could not be persuaded to stay behind. Honour called him forth. Andromache hurried to the city wall, from which she could see the plain and the armies. Very soon she saw Hector in the forefront of the fight, his bright armour flashing in the sun.

But her fears had been well founded. Hector was no match for Achilles, who was fighting, in his wrath and grief, with double his former strength. Soon Hector lay dead on the ground.

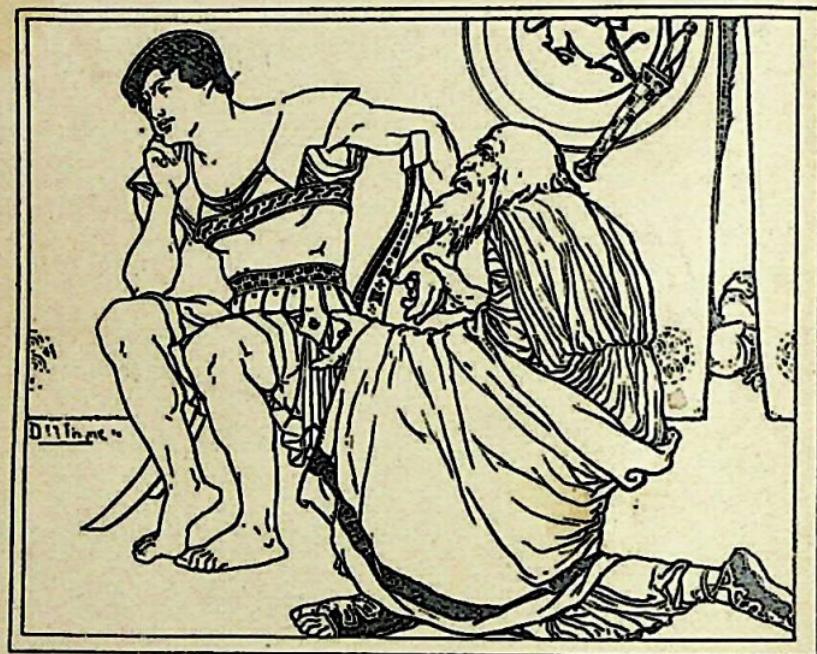
So angry and so reckless was Achilles, that he bound the dead body to his chariot wheels and dragged it round the city walls. But the gods loved Hector, and when Achilles left the body lying in the dust, by their care it was still as fair as in life.

Now, all through this time Achilles had been

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hardhearted and selfish. It was his fault that Patroclus had died. If he had not sat nursing his wrongs there would have been no need for Patroclus to go out to battle in his place.

When he had revenged himself by slaying Hector, he had not treated his gallant enemy



ACHILLES AND PRIAM.

as he deserved. Even a fallen foe who had died bravely ought to have been respected.

But Achilles was to have one more chance. The gods put it into the heart of King Priam to go himself and ask Achilles for the body of his son. At dead of night the poor old man set out from the city, threw himself upon

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Achilles' mercy, and begged him to give up the body of Hector.

All that was noble in Achilles was touched. He raised Priam from his knees, granted his request, and sent him back to the city with an escort.

So both the Trojans and the Greeks were able to do honour to their fallen leaders. While the Trojans were mourning beside the dead body of Hector, they saw smoke and flame rising from the plain outside. It was from the funeral pyre which the Greeks had built for Patroclus.

As for Achilles, he lived to do the Greeks many a service. By and by, as he was leading a storming party he was slain by an arrow aimed by Paris. The Greeks sorrowed greatly at his death. Though he had deserted them once, he had made up for it by all he had done for them since.

It was not by force, however, but by cunning that the Greeks at last took Troy. The crafty Odysseus made the plan.

First of all, he set carpenters to work to make an enormous wooden horse. It was hollow, and inside it many men could hide themselves. The best warriors were chosen and concealed there.

Then the Greeks pretended they were going to give up the siege in despair. From the city walls the Trojans could see them pulling down their tents and packing their belongings. Everything was carried off to the ships. When all

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was ready the men went aboard also. The sails were set and the Greek fleet went away. The only thing they had left behind was the big wooden horse.

Of course, as soon as the Greeks had gone, the Trojans came running out of the city to explore the camp. They could hardly believe it was true that the enemy had really left their country. But, search as they would, they found no man. The Greeks inside the horse could hear them talking, but kept very, very quiet.

The Trojans could not imagine what the horse was.

"Perhaps it is an engine of war," said one. "Let us break it in pieces before any harm is done."

"Nay," said another, "it is too fine for that. I believe it is an image that the Greeks worship. Or perhaps it is an offering to their gods."

"If it is an offering to their gods," said a third, "let us take it into Troy and offer it to our own instead."

While they were talking and hesitating a certain wise priest called Laocoön came up.

"The Greeks are not to be trusted," he said, "even when they make offerings. There is some trick in this. Leave it alone."

He threw his spear at the horse. When the spear hit the side the horse shook. Though the Greeks tried to keep still, they could not help their armour jingling. The Trojans heard the noise.

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"Laocoön speaks well," they cried. "There is something wrong here."

But the time had come when Troy was to fall. The gods would not allow the city to be saved by Laocoön's good sense.

"Look! look!" cried one of the Trojans. The crowd turned. There, swimming through the sea, were two huge serpents. When they reached land they began to glide swiftly towards the group round the wooden horse.

Most of the Trojans fled in terror. Laocoön stood firm. His two little sons ran up to him, and he put his arms round them.

But the great snakes coiled round all three. Though they struggled they could not escape. In a few moments they were dead.

"See," said the Trojans, trembling. "The gods are angry with the priest. It must be because he would not let us honour this beautiful offering."

Now Odysseus had wanted to make quite sure that the Trojans would take the horse inside the city. So he had left a friend hidden, with a tale ready to tell.

This man, whose name was Sinon, now saw that the moment to act had come. He ran out and fell on his knees before Priam.

"Who are you?" said the king. "Why are you here?"

"Sire," said Sinon, "I was a prisoner in the Greek camp. Look how my hands are bound."

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He held up his hands, which Odysseus had taken care to tie together.

"When I found they were going to sail back to Greece," went on the supposed prisoner, "I hid myself away. Luckily they did not notice my absence. I dared not come out till they had all gone. Now, O king, I throw myself on your mercy."

Priam believed the story and pitied Sinon. He told his men to cut off the ropes at once. Sinon pretended to be very grateful.

"Command me, O king," he said. "All that you ask me I will do."

"One thing you can indeed do for me," answered Priam. "Tell us what is the meaning of this great horse of wood. Is it some trick to ensnare us?"

"Nay," said Sinon. "It is a very sacred image. The Greeks could not take it with them in their ships, it was too large. But it brings prosperity wherever it goes. Bid your men carry it to the city. Keep it in your citadel. You will come to bless the day you received it."

Laocoön's death, and Sinon's story, decided Priam. He ordered his men to drag the horse into the city. They found it hard to do, as you may think, for it was very big and heavy.

When they got it as far as the gate, it stuck fast.

"Break down the wall," said Priam. "We need walls no longer. The enemy is gone."

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So they made a hole in the wall and got the horse through it. After that all was easy enough.

Every one was ready to lend a hand in bringing luck to Troy. So one pushed and another pulled, and before very long the horse was in the citadel.

"Now, Trojans," said Priam, "feast and be merry. The Greeks are gone. Their sacred image is ours."

Far into the night they sang and feasted. At last every one went to sleep and the city was quiet.

Then Sinon crept softly to the horse, and let the Greeks out. They made a bonfire in a high place. As soon as the Greek ships saw the signal they came hurrying back. They had been waiting just out of sight.

Of course there was no hope for the Trojans. The enemy were inside the gates, and could admit their friends. Though the Trojans fought bravely, the Greeks were too many for them.

Priam was slain. Paris was already dead. All the other Trojan leaders perished. Menelaus ran through the burning streets looking for Helen. The whole war had been fought on her account. There was no one left to defend her now.

But Helen of her own accord came out to her former husband. Nothing but trouble had come to her since she fled from Greece. Many a time she had repented that flight. So many brave

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men had been slain in shielding her. She was willing now to die.

Yet when Menelaus saw her, he forgave her all. He took her back to Greece with him and honoured her as queen again.

Not one stone was left upon another in Troy. The men were dead. The women were carried away prisoners. For many years the Trojan women were captives in Greece. When the sun rose each morning they would look over to the east. There once had been their home. There the towers of their city had risen against the sun-flushed sky.

But the will of the gods was fulfilled. Troy had perished.

III

ODYSSEUS AND THE ONE-EYED GIANTS

“ But natures of the noblest frame
These toils and dangers please :
And they take comfort in the same
As much as you in ease.”

S. DANIEL.

ALTHOUGH the Greeks had taken Troy, their troubles were not over. They had done many cruel and evil deeds, and they had to pay for them.

Some never reached home at all. Others found trouble waiting for them when they got there. Odysseus wandered over the seas for ten years before he reached his home, the rocky little island of Ithaca.

He had all sorts of adventures. One of the most terrible was when he landed by mistake on an island inhabited by some giants called the Cyclopes.

Cyclopes means, “with eyes like wheels.” Each Cyclops had one eye only, right in the middle of his forehead. It was so big that it

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was quite as useful as two would be to most people.

When Odysseus and his men came in sight of the island of the Cyclopes, they could not see any one about. There were beautiful green meadows and fresh streams, and wild goats running over the hills. But there did not seem to be any men.

"Let us go ashore," said the tired sailors. "We can get fresh meat and drink. It is time we had a rest, after so many days' sailing."

Odysseus saw no harm in this. They landed, and killed some of the goats, and feasted all that day.

But Odysseus noticed some smoke in the distance.

"Where there is smoke there is fire," he said to himself. "And where there is fire there are men. I must find out who they are. Perhaps they will help us."

So, next morning, he took some flour and wine to give as a present, and he chose twelve of his best men. Then they set out to explore the island.

Sure enough, they soon found a cave which some one evidently lived in. The mouth was almost hidden by bushes. But round it, and inside too, there were pens for keeping animals. The walls were built up of huge stones.

"He must have been a strong man who was able to lift these big rocks," thought Odysseus.

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Inside they found numbers and numbers of cheeses, stacked up in baskets. There were big bowls of milk, too. At the very back there were a great many lambs and kids, all bleating and crying for their mothers, who were out in the fields.

Though there was no one there, the place seemed rather uncanny.

"Let us take some cheese and some milk," said the sailors, "and get quickly back to the ship, before the owner of the cave returns."

"Nay," said Odysseus, "why should we run away before we see what he is like? He may turn out to be a good friend."

All afternoon, therefore, they waited. But when evening came, and the Cyclops came stalking in, they were sorry they had not run away while they could. For the owner of the cave was Polyphemus, one of the biggest and wickedest of all the giants.

Polyphemus did not see them at once, for they had crept to the back of the cave. He was very busy driving in his sheep. When all were in, he rolled an enormous stone in front of the opening to the cave. No one could get out now.

Then he set to work to make a fire. Of course, the bright flames lighted up every corner, and it was not long before he saw his unexpected visitors.

"What business have you in my cave?" he

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roared. "Are you traders, or are you sea-pirates?"

Most of the Greeks were so frightened that they could not speak. Odysseus stepped forward, and tried to make the best of a bad business.

"We are neither," he said. "We are Greeks on our way home after the siege of Troy. We are suppliants for your bounty. Be kind to us, in the name of that great god Zeus, whom you and we alike revere."

"Zeus!" cried the Cyclops, with a harsh laugh. "I care nothing about your Zeus! We do what we like here, I can tell you. Where is your ship?"

Odysseus dared not tell him, for he feared the giant would destroy it.

"Alas," he said, "we have no ship. She was wrecked in the storm. We few were able to reach the shore, but our comrades were drowned."

Not a word did the Cyclops say in answer to this. But suddenly he snatched up two of the Greeks in his enormous hands, and dashed them against the wall of the cave. The Greeks could hardly believe their eyes when they saw him sit down and actually eat up their bodies.

After his meal he felt sleepy. He lay down on the floor of the cave and fell fast asleep.

Now, although the Greeks were terribly frightened, they thought they saw a chance of escape.

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Odysseus drew his sword, and crept up to the snoring giant.

But just as he was about to kill him, he suddenly remembered the rock that the Cyclops had put across the opening to the cave. It was so heavy that if twenty-four horses had been harnessed to it they could not have dragged it away. What would be the use, then, of killing the giant, and starving to death inside the cave?

Odysseus put his sword back, sadly. The Greeks spent the night miserably, weeping, and wondering if they would ever get away alive. Odysseus himself sat thinking, trying to find a plan by which he could save himself and his comrades. But there seemed no possible way.

When morning came, the giant went off, driving his flocks before him.

But before he went, he ate two more of the Greeks for his breakfast. And he took care to roll the stone back again after he had gone out.

However, as the day wore on, Odysseus had an idea.

Polyphemus had left his staff behind him. It was a piece of olive-wood, smooth and hard, and as long as the mast of a ship.

"Come and help me," cried Odysseus; "I want to cut off a long piece of this staff, and sharpen it."

So they all worked away. Soon they had made a sharp point.

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"Now, let us hide it away," said Odysseus. "When Polyphemus is asleep, here is a weapon that will blind him. Then we can escape."

The staff was so heavy that it took four men to move it. So the Greeks drew lots to see who should help Odysseus with it when the time came. If they failed, the giant would certainly kill them at once.

By and by Polyphemus returned. All happened as it had done the night before. The Cyclops drove in his sheep, closed up the cave, lighted a fire, and killed and ate two of the sailors.

Just as he was looking round for a drink of milk to wash down his dreadful supper, Odysseus stepped forward.

"Try this wine, O Cyclops," he said. "I brought it for a present for you before I knew you were going to be so cruel."

Polyphemus snatched the bowl out of his hand and drank it off at a gulp.

"Give me another, good stranger," he said eagerly, "and tell me your name. I want to make you a present in return."

"My name is Nobody," said Odysseus.

"Very well, then, Nobody," said the giant; "I will make you a present as I promised. I won't eat you up until I've eaten all the others."

Then he roared with laughter, as if he had made a very good joke. But almost before he had done laughing he tumbled down on the floor fast asleep.



IN THE CAVE OF POLYPHEMUS.

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Then Odysseus and his three companions dragged their sharp stake to the fire and made it red-hot, and thrust it into the giant's one eye.

Polyphemus sprang up howling with pain and surprise. He plucked the stake out and flung it away. Then he began to rush about the cave like a madman, yelling to his friends to come and help him.

All the other giants came running up. They shouted to know what was the matter.

"What is it, Polyphemus?" they cried. "Is somebody stealing your sheep, or injuring you?"

"Nobody is injuring me. I am in dreadful pain," bellowed Polyphemus.

Now Odysseus reaped the reward of the trick he had played when the giant asked his name.

"Why, if nobody is injuring you," said the other giants, "we cannot help you. It must be the gods who have sent the pain. Pray to them to make you better."

So they went away, feeling rather angry at having been wakened for nothing.

All night long Polyphemus groaned and moaned. When morning came he felt he could not go out as usual.

So he groped his way to the mouth of the cave, and rolled away the stone to let out the sheep. However, lest the Greeks should slip out with them he sat down right across the entrance, with his arms stretched out.

But Odysseus had a plan ready. During the night he had picked out six of the strongest

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sheep, and fastened one of his companions underneath the body of each of them. The thick wool hid the ropes.

To make things safer still, he fastened two other sheep to the first, one on each side. So they would run out of the cave in threes, and the one to which the man was tied would be in the middle.

But the difficulty was about himself. There was no one left to tie him on. He chose the king of the flock, a splendid ram, with very long hair. Then when the time came he took a good hold of the wool and clung to the ram's broad chest.

The plan worked well. As the sheep rushed out, jostling each other, Polyphemus felt their backs lest a man should be riding them. He did not feel the ropes or guess that the sailors were underneath.

Last of all came the big ram, who could not move quickly because Odysseus was so heavy.

Now the ram was a great favourite with the giant.

"Is this you?" he said, as he felt its great back. "Do you come last to-day? Generally you march proudly out, the first of all. Are you sorry for your master, blinded by that wicked Nobody? Ah, how I wish you could speak! You could tell me where he is hiding from my vengeance."

Odysseus, you may be sure, was very glad the ram was not able to answer. He was thankful

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when Polyphemus finished patting and stroking his favourite and let it go.

As soon as they were at a safe distance Odysseus jumped off, and soon freed his companions. They all hurried to the ship, cast off the ropes, and began to row with all their might.

Odysseus was so overjoyed to be safe, and so pleased with the cunning way he had managed to escape, that he could not resist letting the Cyclops know how he had been tricked.

He stood up in the boat and shouted.

"Cyclops," he cried, "your guests have been too much for you, after all. The gods have helped them to revenge themselves upon you. They are safe, and you are blind!"

He had been a little too hasty. Polyphemus, beside himself with rage, came rushing out of the cave. He broke off a whole cliff as he ran, and hurled it after the Greeks.

Though he could not see, he aimed at the place in which he heard the voices. The rock did not hit the boat, but it fell near it, and raised such enormous waves that the Greeks were nearly swamped.

Odysseus said no more till they had got to a safer distance. Then he shouted again.

"Cyclops!" he cried, "when men ask you who blinded you, you may tell them it was Odysseus, who dwells in Ithaca."

Polyphemus burst into tears of rage. The Greeks left him shaking his fist and begging the gods to punish them.

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However, they were safe for the present. They soon reached the place where they had left their comrades and the other ships. As quickly as possible all embarked, and they set out on their travels again.

IV

THE ISLE OF ENCHANTMENT

“Enter these enchanted woods
Ye who dare.”

MEREDITH.

THOUGH Odysseus and his friends had escaped from Polyphemus with their lives, the gods had heard the prayers of the injured Cyclops. For a long time afterwards one misfortune after another befell the Greeks.

At first all seemed to be going well. The next land they saw belonged to the King of the Winds. He was very hospitable, and entertained them for a whole month.

When at last they were saying farewell, the king drew Odysseus on one side. He showed him a huge leather sack, tied tightly with ropes.

“Look,” he said, “I am going to give you this for a parting present. I have tied up in it all the noisy storm-winds which troubled you so much. They cannot escape. But I have left the gentle west wind free, to fill

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your sails and drive you quickly home to Ithaca."

Odysseus thanked the king warmly, and put the sack carefully away in the ship.

All went as had been promised. The sea was smooth, the soft winds filled the sails, and every day brought the wanderers nearer home.

At last, on the tenth day, they saw land. Nearer and nearer it came, and soon they could see that it was Ithaca indeed. By and by they were close to the shore, so close that they could see the smoke from the fires. It seemed as if all their weary journeying was over.

Now Odysseus was very tired, for he had trusted no one to steer except himself. For nine days and nights he had not slept.

"We are safe now, comrades," he said. "Take the helm, and guide us in. I will lie down and rest." *steering wheel*

He lay down, and was asleep in a moment.

Meantime his companions bustled about, getting ready to land. Some of them found the leather sack.

"What can this be?" they said to each other. "It is very heavy, and very carefully fastened. Surely there must be treasure in it."

Others came running up to look.

"It is something Odysseus has hidden," they said; "he ought to have shared it with us."

Curiosity and jealousy were too much for them. They cut the ropes.

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You may imagine what happened. Poor Odysseus was waked from his sleep, to find all the winds tearing and screaming round the ships. The clouds came rushing up, the waves rose mountains high, the sails flapped and cracked, and the vessels tossed like corks. It was all the Greeks could do to save the ships from sinking.

In a few moments they had been driven backward, and were racing before the storm. Ithaca was out of sight, and all their hopes shattered. Odysseus was so bitterly disappointed that he was ready to drown himself.

After this they wandered about miserably for a long time. Once they came again to the land of the Wind King. But he drove them away.

"Surely the gods have laid a curse on you," he said. "I may not help you again."

Another time they sailed near an island of giants, who pelted them with great rocks and sank all the ships but one.

Odysseus was now lonelier than ever. He did not know where he was, or which was the way home. He could not help grieving over his dead comrades. He was not sure even that those who were left would reach home safe and sound.

One day they came to a pleasant, green island, and ventured to cast anchor. Then they lay down on the shore, close to the ship, and rested.

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At first they were content to lie still. But by and by they grew hungry. However, they dared not go away to look for food. For all they knew there might be giants, or monsters, or savage men in the island. They had passed through so many troubles that they could not face risks.

However, Odysseus, as their leader, felt he must care for his men.

"I will go and search the island," he said.
"Stay here, and come to my help if I call."

He took his sword and spear, and climbed up through the woods, making as little noise as he could.

There seemed to be nothing to be afraid of. The path ran through green, silent forest. The sunlight came faintly down through the close branches, and birds darted in and out above Odysseus' head.

Then at last, in the very heart of the wood, he saw the roofs and chimneys of a great house. Blue smoke went up from its fires, and the sun blazed in its windows. Not a sound was to be heard.

"Now surely this is the dwelling of some great lord," said Odysseus to himself. "Giants and savages live in caves and dens, not in great houses like this. Our troubles are over."

However, he thought it best to go back and consult his friends. On the way he speared a great red deer, and took it home on his back for supper.

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But not even the good venison and Odysseus' cheerful report could calm the fears of his comrades.

"There will be some trap," they said. "If we go, we shall all die."

In the end they agreed that half should stay by the ship, and half go to the house to ask for help. Odysseus was to lead one company, and another Greek, Eurylochus, the other.

To settle which should go and which should stay, they cast lots. Two bits of wood were put into a helmet, one for Eurylochus, one for Odysseus. When the helmet was shaken, one piece fell out. It was the one marked Eurylochus. So Eurylochus was to lead the exploring party.

Eurylochus did not like the task at all. However, he said good-bye, and went off, with his company, sulkily enough.

They were soon out of sight in the dense woods. After a little while, the Greeks on the shore could not even hear them.

The day passed on, and Odysseus and his friends grew more and more anxious. Just as they were thinking of going out in search of the others, they heard the bushes and branches snapping as a man broke through them. They clutched their weapons and stood ready.

But it was Eurylochus. He came, wringing his hands and weeping, all alone.

The Greeks crowded round to hear what had happened.

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"Alas!" said Eurylochus. "The worst has happened."

"What, are our comrades slain?" cried the rest. "Lead us then to avenge them."

"Nay," said Eurylochus. "Giants and mortal men you can fight with sword and spear. But against enchantment you are powerless."

"Enchantment!" they echoed in astonishment.

Then Eurylochus told them what had happened.

"We went up through the wood along the path," he said, "till we came near to that ill-omened house. A dreadful quiet was over it. No dog barked, no bird sang. But in front of it were wolves and lions, walking restlessly. When they heard us, they came running, and fawned upon us and licked our hands.

"'Surely there is magic here,' I said to myself.

"Then we heard a low, sweet song inside the house—a song such as maidens sing when weaving at the loom.

"'Come forth, O sweet singer,' we cried.

"A lady heard us and came out. She was dressed in white, gleaming with precious stones.

"'Welcome, weary travellers,' she said. 'Here is rest, and food, and safety. Enter in.'

"But I feared her, for all her sweet ways and looks. So when the rest passed through the door, I hid myself and watched. Woe is me for what I saw!"

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"Why, were there warriors hidden to fall upon our comrades?" cried the Greeks.

"Nay, worse and tenfold worse!" moaned Eurylochus. "You shall hear.

"The lady and her maidens led our comrades into a great hall. Tables were spread for a feast. They sat down on cushioned couches, and ate and drank merrily.

"But when they had eaten and were weary, they lay back sleepily on the cushions. Then the lady stepped into the middle of the hall, a wand in her hand. My heart sank, and I knew some mischief would come of it.

"Her strange eyes gleamed wickedly, and she muttered some spell.

"In an instant, my two-and-twenty good comrades vanished, and in their stead two-and-twenty swine appeared. The lady and her maidens fell on them with blows and cries, and drove them from the hall.

"But I turned, horror-stricken, and fled here to tell the tale."

The Greeks looked at each other in despair. This was indeed a terrible tale. Who was to save them now?

Odysseus had listened anxiously.

"Fear not, my comrades," he said. "It was through me that you came into this danger. I will save you from it. Come back with me, Eurylochus, and we will return together rejoicing."

But Eurylochus would not go near the

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enchanted wood again. Odysseus went off alone, with his hand on his sword.

This time he had not got far before he saw some one coming to meet him.

It was a young man, with a winged cap on his head and winged sandals on his feet. His step was so light and swift that he seemed to fly.

Odysseus knew him at once. It was Hermes, the messenger of the gods. The wings were to help him to speed swiftly on their errands.

"Hail, Hermes," cried Odysseus.

"Hail, crafty Odysseus," said the other. "But what do you here? Know you not that this is the isle where dwells Circe the enchantress?"

Odysseus told his story, and begged Hermes to advise him.

"Unhappy man!" said Hermes. "You have indeed perils before you."

Then he plucked a tiny plant from the ground at his feet. It bore a little milk-white flower, but its root was black.

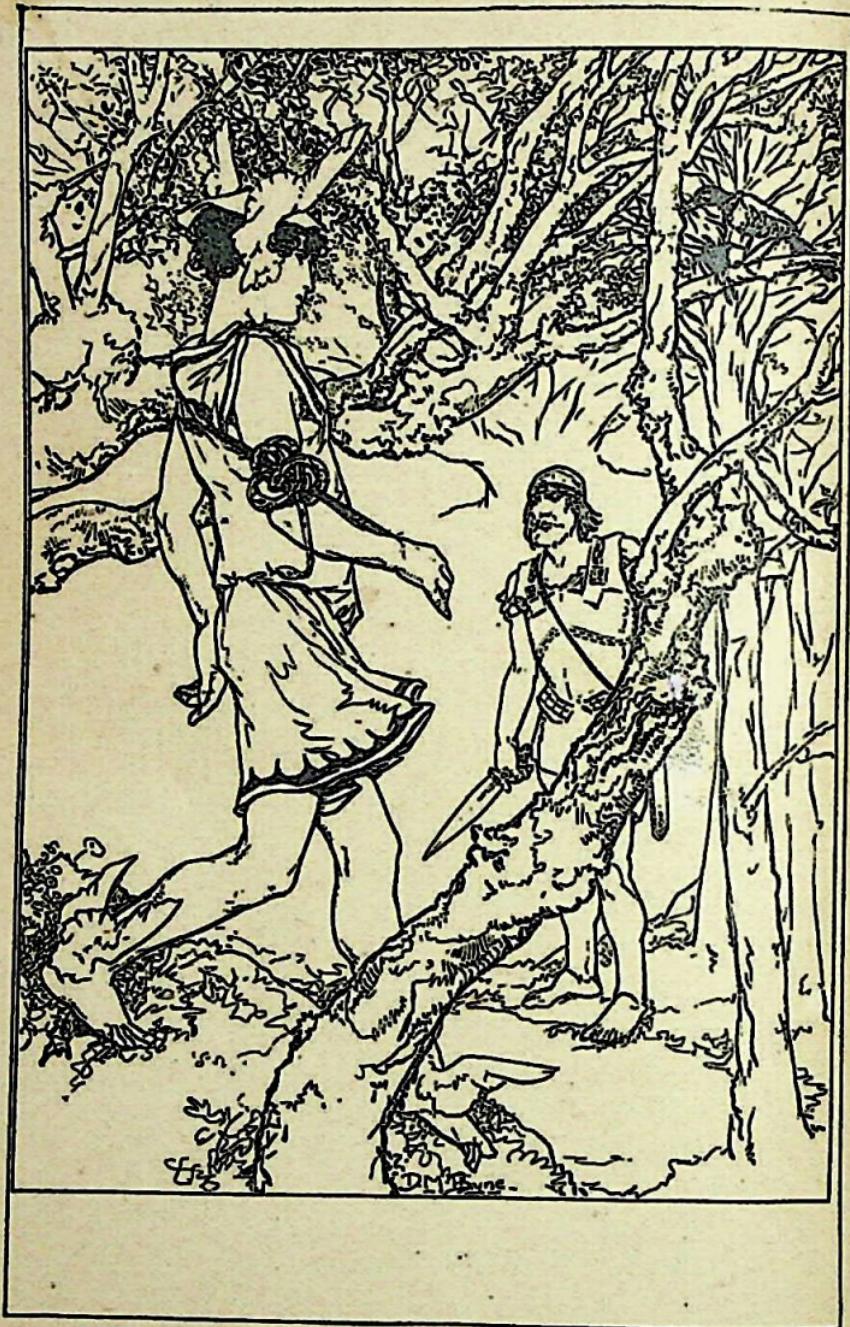
"Take this," he said. "With its scent in your nostrils, Circe's charms will be powerless."

Odysseus thanked him, and hurried on. Very soon he came in sight of the great, quiet house.

All happened as before. Circe came out and greeted the traveller warmly. She led him into her hall, and the maids set food before him.

Circe herself mixed wine and honey in a silver cup, and bade him drink.

The moment he had done so, she raised her wand and muttered her spell.



ODYSSEUS ASKS FOR HELP FROM HERMES.

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But nothing happened. He was saved by Hermes' flower.

Circe was astonished and dismayed.

"This is what the gods told me," she cried. "One day Odysseus of Ithaca was to come hither, and on him my wiles should have no power. Without doubt you are he."

The danger was now over. Circe dared not harm one whom the gods protected. She restored the Greeks to their own shape, and gave them all they needed.

For a whole year they were guests in her palace and lacked for nothing.

But by and by they began to long for the sea again. For across the sea lay Ithaca, and in Ithaca their wives and children and homes.

So they bade farewell to the enchantress, launched the ship, and set forth again upon their wanderings.

V

THE WANDERER'S RETURN

"Now rest you, brother mariners,
We will not wander more."

TENNYSON.

WHILE Odysseus was having all these adventures, there was great distress in his rocky home at Ithaca.

His wife Penelope feared he must be dead. She could hear no news of him. Year after year passed by.

The people of Ithaca tried to persuade her to marry again. She was not only lovely and good, but she was wealthy too. There were plenty of greedy young men who would have been glad to marry her and share her riches. But she still hoped that one day Odysseus would come back to her.

Meanwhile she had great trouble with her suitors. They would not take no for an answer. They were jealous of each other, and rough to Penelope herself.

Every day numbers of them used to come to

"

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her house and make free with her belongings. They drank her wine, killed her cows and sheep, and did what they liked. And all the time they tormented her to choose one of them for her husband.

Penelope put them off as well as she could. She was weaving a great piece of linen.

"Let me finish this," she said, "before I think about marriage. I will choose when it is done."

So every day she sat in the hall and wove, and the suitors saw the web grow longer and longer.

But when they had gone home for the night she undid all her day's work. So time passed on, and the piece was never nearer being finished.

However, one of her maids let out the secret So Penelope had to promise not to play the trick again. By and by the web was finished. It seemed as if now she would have to marry.

She had one son, whose name was Telemachus. He was only twelve years old, so he could not drive away the suitors.

"Go to find your father, Telemachus," she said; "I feel he is alive. Tell him what trouble we are in and bring him home."

So Telemachus sailed away to Greece, and sought his father. But all he could hear was that some one had seen him alive. Nobody could tell Telemachus where.

Now the truth was that Odysseus was a kind of prisoner. He had lost all his comrades in a

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shipwreck. A nymph, or fairy as we should call her, named Calypso, had rescued Odysseus himself. Then she was so pleased with him that she would not let him leave her.

Poor Odysseus used to sit on the beach and look at the waves and long for home. He was grateful to Calypso, but he wanted to get away.

At last the gods interfered. Hermes, the messenger, was sent to tell Calypso she must let Odysseus go. Very sadly, she obeyed.

So at last, one misty morning, Odysseus landed again in rocky Ithaca. He was so happy when he saw the old hills and forests and fields that he knelt down and kissed the earth.

Now, Odysseus was only one man, and the suitors were many. He dared not walk into his house just as he was and order them out. He had to make a plan.

First he disguised himself as a beggar. The goddess Athene helped him. She made him look like an old man with wrinkled skin and scanty hair. He was dressed in rags and an old deerskin. In his hand he carried a wallet where he could put any scraps he begged.

Then he went to the hut of his old swineherd, Eumaeus.

Eumaeus was one of the few servants who had remained faithful to his absent master. The younger ones had forgotten Odysseus, and did what the suitors told them.

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However, Eumaeus did not know that the ragged beggar was his master.

"Come in, old man," he said; "I can give you dinner and a bed. You look weary."

"Weary indeed I am," whined Odysseus. "Long ago I fought at the siege of Troy. But I have been through many a sore strait since."

"You are not alone in that, old man," said Eumaeus. "But come in and rest yourself."

Next morning who should arrive but Telemachus, back from his travels. The swineherd and the beggar were just cooking their breakfast when he came in.

All three shared it together. Then Telemachus sent Eumaeus to the house to tell Penelope of his return.

No sooner were Odysseus and Telemachus left alone than the goddess Athene appeared. Telemachus could not see her. He wondered why the farm dogs began to whine and shiver and look frightened.

"Make yourself known to your son," said Athene. She touched the beggar with her wand. At once the rags and dirt fell off. There he stood, Odysseus again, tall and goodly and strong.

You may be sure Telemachus was delighted. Father and son hugged each other, and could scarcely speak for joy.

"Now, my son," said Odysseus, "you must help me to turn out these rascals of suitors. How are they armed?"

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"They have swords, my father," answered Telemachus, "but they have neither shields nor helmets nor breastplates."

"Good," said Odysseus. "But do not such weapons still hang on the walls of the hall, as they did when I was here?"

"Yes, my father. There are many there."

"You must hide them away, Telemachus. If the suitors ask you where they are, tell them the smoke of the fire blackened the steel. But keep out two swords, two spears, two shields. You and I will have need of them by and by."

By the time Eumaeus came back all the plans were settled. Telemachus went home, and did not say a word about Odysseus. Meanwhile Athene had changed him back into the likeness of the old beggar.

After a little while Odysseus begged Eumaeus to take him to the palace.

"The suitors are rough and will ill-use you, old man," said the swineherd.

"I care not," said Odysseus; "I have been through too many troubles to mind a little roughness."

"As you like," said Eumaeus. So they set off.

When they got near the house, the first thing Odysseus saw was his favourite hound, called Argos. He was an old dog now, poor fellow, lean and weak and sad.

But the moment he saw Odysseus he knew him. He tried to stand up on his poor shaky



**ARGOS
KNOWS ODYSSEUS**

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legs, and wagged his tail. His eyes shone with joy.

"That has been a fine dog," said Odysseus, pretending he knew nothing. "Whose is he?"

"Ah!" said Eumaeus. "Dead men's dogs never lead happy lives. Once this old Argos was the swiftest and strongest of all our hounds. But since his master went away and died he has had no one to care for him."

Just as he said that, they came to the hound. The poor old fellow gave one sigh of delight and rolled over dead. Odysseus went on with tears in his eyes.

They entered the hall together. Telemachus was sitting on a raised seat in the middle. All round him the suitors were laughing and feasting and shouting.

By and by Odysseus took his wallet and went about among them, begging humbly. Few would help him. One caught up a wooden footstool and hit him a blow on the shoulder. Even the waiting-maids jeered at him.

At last sunset came, and one by one the suitors went home. This gave Odysseus and Telemachus a chance to hide the armour and weapons. This done, Telemachus went to his room, and Odysseus sat by the fire in the empty hall.

He had not been sitting long, when down came Penelope. She had kept out of sight of the suitors. But she wished to see any stranger, even a beggar, who might have news of her husband.

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She spoke gently to the supposed beggar, and asked him who he was.

"I am from Crete, fair lady," answered Odysseus. "The goodly Odysseus stayed with me on his way to Troy."

Now so many people had told Penelope stories of that kind that at first she did not believe him.

"If you indeed saw my husband," she said, "tell me how he was dressed."

"Madam," said Odysseus, "he wore a mantle of purple. On the brooch which fastened it was the figure of a hound with a fawn in its grasp."

"Of a truth this was my Odysseus," cried Penelope, "for I myself gave him both cloak and brooch. Have you news of him, good stranger?"

"Yea, lady," said Odysseus. "He is alive and will return this very year."

Such tidings seemed almost too good to be true.

"I fear you say this to please me, kind stranger," said Penelope. "But I thank you for your kindness. And now let me send a woman to bathe your weary feet. You have come far to-day."

As luck would have it, the maid Penelope chose to send was Odysseus' old nurse. The hall was dark, and at first the old woman saw nothing strange.

But as she bathed away the dust her fingers touched the scar of an old wound. In a moment she knew her master, and began to speak.

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Odysseus put his hand over her mouth. "Silence, good nurse," he said. "None must know me yet."

Penelope came back as the bathing was finished. The news had made her restless. "Stranger," she said, "if Odysseus indeed returns, it must be soon. I cannot say nay to the suitors much longer. To-morrow I am going to bring down the great bow my husband left behind him, and the twelve iron axes, each with a hole in its blade. Few could string that bow in the old days. But Odysseus used to bend it, and to set the blades in line. Then his arrow flew, unswerving, through all twelve. To-morrow I shall tell the suitors that I will wed the man who can do that deed as my husband could."

"Madam," said the beggar, "Odysseus will be with you before any of the suitors have bent that bow."

"Would that it might be so!" sighed Penelope. Then she bade him good-night and left him.

Next day the test was tried. The twelve axes were set in line and the great bow brought down.

Telemachus tried first.

"If I can bend this bow," he said, "I will let no stranger bear away my mother."

But he could not string the bow. "It is for a mightier than I," he said.

One after another the suitors strove to bend

THE WANDERER'S RETURN

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the bow. They warmed it, they greased it, they puffed and panted. But it was no good.

When they had all failed the beggar came up humbly and asked if he might try.

"Impudent rascal!" cried the suitors. "You are a fine bridegroom!"

"Nay," said Penelope, "let him try. If he can bend it I will give him presents and send him rejoicing on his way."

"And I will give him the bow itself," cried Telemachus. "Go, mother, to your weaving. This is men's work."

Penelope went softly away with her maidens. Then Odysseus took the bow. At first he fumbled clumsily with it. The suitors laughed and mocked.

Then suddenly he bent the great bow, and the arrow sped from it, straight through the line of axeheads.

Odysseus nodded to Telemachus. "It is time to eat now, my son," said he. This was the signal agreed on.

Father and son together held the suitors at bay. After a short fight the hall was cleared, and the suitors were killed or captured. The old nurse came creeping in, and held up her hands in amazement.

"Come," said Odysseus, "set the hall to rights. When all is fair and clean, fetch my wife hither."

So they brought water and washed the floor and tables, and set all straight. Then the old nurse ran to Penelope's room.

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"Waken, waken, lady!" she cried. "Your desire is come. Odysseus is returned."

Penelope opened sleepy eyes. "Why, nurse," she said, "you are mad or dreaming! How could Odysseus come in the middle of the night, when the gates are shut?"

"Nay," said the nurse. "Indeed, indeed it is true. He was that poor beggar in the hall. I knew him when I washed his feet."

Half happy and half doubtful, Penelope went down. Odysseus soon convinced her that the good news was true.

They sat hand in hand on the high seat, while the maidens danced and the minstrels played. And there was peace, and quiet, and happiness in Ithaca. The wanderer had returned.

VI

THE STOLEN CHILD

“ For winter's rains and ruins are over
And all the season of snows and sins.

And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.”

SWINBURNE.

THERE was one goddess whom the Greeks loved dearly. Her name was Demeter. It was her business to take care of seed-time and harvest. Corn was the most important thing men could have, because bread was made from it. So men were always careful to honour Demeter, who sent them their corn.

For a long time Demeter lived very happily. She had one little daughter, whose name was Persephone. When her mother went away to distant lands, Persephone of course had to stay behind.

This was a trouble to Demeter. However, the child seemed quite safe, and her mother was

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not afraid to leave her. She was such a dear little thing that every one loved her. So there were many people ready to help to amuse her when her mother could not be with her.

One day Demeter kissed the little girl good-bye and went off as usual. She had not been gone long when the nymphs came to take Persephone out to play.

They were all happy and merry together, gathering flowers in the meadows.

Unluckily the god Pluto happened to be near. He was the king of what the Greeks called the Underworld. They thought that when a man died his spirit flew off to Pluto's kingdom, under the earth.

This was not an unhappy place, in one way. The spirits there felt as if they were in a dream. There was no warmth or light or beauty. The spirits flitted about in shadows and chill darkness.

Now when Pluto heard the laughing and talking in the meadows, he looked to see who was there. And when he saw the lovely child, he longed to take her away to his shadowy land below. She would bring life and sunshine wherever she went.

He knew Demeter would never let her go if she were asked. And he knew Persephone would be frightened if she saw him. So he decided he must carry her off by force.

So without more ado he split the earth open with his sceptre and appeared. Out sprang the



PLUTO SEES PERSEPHONE IN THE MEADOWS.

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coal-black horses which drew his chariot. He seized the little girl in his arms. Then the horses plunged into the earth again, the ground closed, and there was nothing to be seen or heard.

You may imagine how terrified the poor nymphs were. One minute Persephone was quite safe, the next she had vanished. They had had their backs turned when Pluto appeared. They heard Persephone scream, but the same instant the earth had closed. They could not think what in the world had happened.

After they had looked all round, they decided they must tell Demeter that the child was lost. Weeping and hanging their heads, they went to her with the sad story.

Demeter wasted no time in blaming them. She set off that moment to look for her daughter. It did not matter how far she had to go, or how long it took, or what dangers she might meet. Her one thought was to find her little one.

But, alas ! it seemed as though Persephone was gone for ever. No one had seen her. No one had any news of her.

Demeter searched high and low, as long as the daylight lasted. When night fell she took a torch, and still went on looking. She would hardly stop to eat or sleep.

When she had made sure that Persephone was nowhere near home, she began to look farther off. All over Greece she wandered.

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Sometimes strangers would try to coax her to stay with them. But she could not be content to give up her search. She would thank them, and perhaps rest an hour or two. But always she went on again.

Only once she made an exception. She had come to one of the Greek cities, and sat down beside a spring to rest. By and by the daughters of the king came that way.

When they saw the tired stranger, looking so weary and sad, they pitied her.

"What is it, poor soul?" they said. "Why are you so sad?"

They had no idea they were speaking to a goddess.

"Alas," said Demeter, "I have lost my child, fair maidens. Perchance you may have seen her I seek—a little lovely thing, weeping, I fear me, for her mother."

"Nay," said the girls, "we have seen no child. But we can feel for you who have lost one. For our own baby brother is weak and ailing, and perhaps dying. To lose him by death will be to lose him indeed."

Now it was Demeter's turn to feel pitiful. Her heart went out to this other mother in distress.

"Let me come back with you, maidens," she said. "I may be able to help you."

When she had entered the palace, she begged to see the child. He was brought and placed in her arms.

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The moment she touched him, his crying stopped. He smiled, nestled to her, and fell asleep.

Now the queen, of course, did not know that Demeter was a goddess. She thought she must be some one very clever in caring for sick people.

"Kind stranger," she said, "I see you are a skilful nurse. Stay with me, I beseech you, that my child may not die."

Demeter was so sorry for her that she agreed. Day by day the baby grew stronger in her care. Never had there been so strong and fine a child.

Demeter had secretly made a plan.

"I know what mothers feel now," she said to herself, "when they lose a child. We gods live for ever, and so have no fear of death. But a mortal, whose child may die, must be in terror lest she lose it, as I, alas! have lost my little one. Now because this woman has been kind to me, and because of my own grief, I will make one mortal happy. I will give this child my own nature, and he shall never die."

Now the only way she could do this was by the magic of fire. In the daytime she could not do what she wanted. But at night, when his mother was asleep, she used to lay him in the hearth. The flames leapt round him and wrapped him. Yet, by her magic, they did not harm him. They were giving him new life.

Unluckily one night his mother heard a noise, and wondered what was happening. She came

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quietly in, and to her horror saw the baby in the fire. She screamed aloud.

"Wicked woman!" she shrieked. "Would you kill my child?"

Demeter looked at her with gentle reproach.

"Faithless one!" she said. "Did I not bring back your child to you from the gates of death? I would have saved him from pain for ever. But you have surprised the secrets of the gods. I may aid you no more. Farewell!"

She went slowly out into the night.

Meantime the queen paid no heed to her words. She was eagerly straining the baby to her, terrified lest he was burnt.

But soon she saw that there was no mark of fire upon him. Even in her arms he leapt and struggled to get to the flames again.

Then she noticed that his little fists were clenched. She gently unclasped them. In each was an ear of golden corn. It was the last gift of the Corn-goddess to her human nursling.

"Alas, I have driven out a true friend!" cried the queen. "Come back, great goddess, for goddess you must be, and hear my thanks."

Demeter heard but could not answer. And the queen soon forgot her regrets in gratitude. For the baby prospered. All his life good luck followed him, because he had had so wonderful a nurse. He blessed the day when his sisters found the stranger at the spring.

Meantime Demeter had set off upon her search again.

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Suddenly she had a good idea.

"I will go and ask the Sun," she thought. "He sees all that happens. He will be able to tell me."

Sure enough, the Sun could answer her.

"Your child is in the Underworld," he said. "King Pluto carried her off."

"Alas, alas!" cried Demeter. "Tell me more. Is she alive? Is she happy?"

"Nay," said the Sun. "My beams never shine into that world of darkness beneath the earth. I cannot tell you whether she lives or dies. Only this I heard among the gods, that it was their will Persephone should stay in the Underworld. She will never return to the light of day."

Then Demeter wept and wrung her hands.

"I will go myself to that dark world," she sobbed. "Together we will return."

"Nay," said the Sun. "Where would you find the entrance? And once there, how should you return? For great rivers flow between the under and the upper world. And at the gates sits Cerberus, the many-headed monster. How could you escape him?"

"Alas, alas!" cried the mother. "Persephone is lost indeed."

Then she went away, very sorrowfully.

"The will of the gods!" she said to herself. "Who are the gods, that they should rob me of my child?"

Week after week passed on. Demeter still

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hid herself away to weep and mourn. Seed-time came, but she was not there to bless the sowing. The earth lay bare and barren. Though the sun shone and the rain fell, they could not make the seed grow. There was no grass for the cattle to eat, nor corn to make bread. Beasts, and birds, and men were starving. In vain they prayed to Demeter. She could not hear them. She could think of nothing but her lost child.

Now when men felt this distress, they prayed to the gods to help them. And at last the gods began to see that they must let Demeter have her child again. Otherwise the whole world would suffer.

So Hermes the messenger was sent down to the dark Underworld. Pluto could not refuse to obey the command of the gods. Very unwillingly, he gave up the little girl. Hermes took her in his arms and sped swiftly back to the light again.

Demeter could hardly believe her eyes when she saw Persephone standing before her, safe and sound. The child flew into her mother's arms. It seemed as if they would never be tired of kissing each other.

When Demeter at last found words, she turned to Hermes and thanked him warmly for what he had done.

"Nay," said Hermes, "I was but the messenger. Indeed, perhaps you will not thank me when you hear the whole of my story."

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Demeter threw her arms round the child again.

"No one shall take her from me now," she said fiercely.

"Demeter," said the messenger, "no man may disobey the will of the gods. And it is their will that henceforth for six months of the year your child shall be restored to you. But for the other six, she must return to the Underworld. When due time comes, she shall wed Pluto, and rule as queen."

"Alas!" cried Demeter, "why must we part at all?"

"The child can tell you," said Hermes. "Farewell."

And he vanished in a moment.

"What does he mean, my darling?" said Demeter.

"Alas, dear mother," said the little girl. "It is all my fault. I was so thirsty in that dreary land. They gave me a juicy pomegranate, and I took one bite of it. Then I remembered that it might be a charm, and I took no more. But for every one of the six seeds I ate, Pluto may keep me one month. So for six months every year I must go back to him."

At first Demeter and Persephone were very sad about this. By and by, however, they got more used to it.

Dull winter, when the ground is frozen and the air dark, is the time when Persephone is spending her six months in the Underworld.

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When she comes back again, and her mother runs to meet her, the whole earth rejoices. Green buds appear, the birds sing, the flowers unfold. It is springtime again.

Even in the Underworld Persephone learnt to be fairly happy. Sometimes she was able to help the poor spirits there.

Once a musician lost his wife. He was so sad and unhappy that he managed to find his way to the Underworld to seek her. When Persephone saw him, and heard his sweet music, she remembered her mother and the world above. She begged Pluto to let the wife go. Pluto agreed, and the two left the realm of spirits hand in hand.

Kindnesses like these made Persephone happy. But the happiest time of all was the day when she might leave the Underworld and join her mother.

STORIES OF ROME

Banke Behari Lal
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Agrawal → 1828

VII

THE ESCAPE OF ÆNEAS

“I sing of arms, I sing of him, who from the Trojan land,
Thrust forth by fate, to Italy and that Lavinian strand
First came.”

WILLIAM MORRIS, *translating VERGIL.*

ALL the tales you have read so far in this book are Greek. The Greeks for a long time were the most famous people in the world. They knew how to make up splendid stories. Though these tales were written in the Greek language, which is not like ours, it is worth while to tell them again in English. They are the finest stories the world has ever known.

But in the end the greatness of the Greeks passed away from them. A new race, called the Romans, came to rule the world. From their city, called Rome, they spread farther and farther. They conquered Italy, and Greece, and the East. They spread over what we call Spain and France. They even came to

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this island of England. The tongue they spoke was Latin.

Though they had defeated the Greeks, they admired them. So they used to tell the old stories over again. They even worshipped some of the Greek gods. But as they spoke Latin, they gave the gods different names.

The Romans liked to believe that their fore-fathers had taken part in the great adventures round Troy.

They said that once upon a time their home had been in Troy. When the Greeks burned the city, a famous Trojan called Æneas had escaped. In the end he came to Italy. By and by his descendants built Rome.

A Roman poet called Vergil put down all the adventures of Æneas in a long poem, from which we know the story.

The tale begins at midnight, on the day when the Trojans had dragged the wooden horse into their city.

Æneas was fast asleep in bed. Suddenly he was waked by a loud noise.

"What can that be?" he thought.

His house had a flat roof, from which one could see a long way. Æneas ran quickly up to it.

It was a moonlight night. He could see all the white houses of the city round him. Out beyond was the quiet sea.

Suddenly, close to him, a burst of flame shot out. The sea shone red. Then another house

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began to pour forth black smoke. The city was burning.

"Treachery!" said Æneas to himself.

He ran down again, waked all in the house, and buckled on his armour.

"Bar the door behind me, and open to no one," he said to his wife. "I shall return, if it please the gods to spare me."

Then he ran into the street. A little group of men was just passing. The first was a priest.

"We are lost, Æneas," he cried. "The Greeks are in the city."

"Then at least let us die like men," shouted Æneas. "To me, to me, Trojans!"

A dreadful time followed. The little band of Trojans did what they could. They ran to the rescue when they saw fighting. But the confusion was so great that some of them were actually struck down by their own friends.

Last of all they made their way to the palace of King Priam. There they saw a sight they never forgot.

The queen and her women, shrieking and crying, had gathered round the altar. There, they thought, the gods would protect them. But old King Priam, who had for years been too feeble to fight, girt on his armour and took a spear in his shaking hand.

There they sat, waiting till the Greeks should break in.

By and by there was a battering on the great bronze doors. The women screamed and

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prayed. But the doors gave way and the Greeks rushed in.

Poor old Priam cast his spear. It hit the shield of one of the Greeks, but fell harmless to the ground.

Then the Greek leader, angry at the resistance, fell upon the old man and slew him. There was no more hope for Troy.

Now Æneas had seen all this. Though it gave him bitter pain, he could not prevent it. He was one against a crowd.

"I can do no more," he said to himself. "Priam is dead. Troy is fallen. I must save those dear to me."

So while the Greeks were busy plundering the palace, Æneas ran back to his own house. There he found his wife Creusa, and his little boy Ascanius, and his old father Anchises.

"Come quickly," he said. "Take our household gods and what else we need. Troy is lost. We must flee to the hills."

The household gods were little images which were kept in the hall of the house to protect it. At meal-times they were always given a share, like the rest of the family. Creusa and Ascanius ran to fetch them.

But old Anchises shook his head. "Flee with your wife and child," he said. "I am too old to die in a strange land. It is death to me to see Troy burnt. I have died already."

"Nay, father," said Æneas. "Think you we could live happy if we left you?"

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"I am too old," said Anchises. "You can walk quickly. I should be a drag."

"But I shall bear you on my shoulders," said Æneas.

"No, no," answered Anchises. "Leave me here."

Æneas coaxed and prayed, but it was no use. Little Ascanius clung to his grandfather's knees, and begged him to yield. But the old man was obstinate.

"We will all stay together, then," said Æneas at last. "If we are to perish, be it so."

But he had hardly spoken when a bright light suddenly shone into the room. A flame leapt to the head of the little Ascanius and glittered on his hair. Yet there was no smoke, or pain, or burning.

"It is a token from the gods," cried Æneas. "Father Jupiter, make this omen surer yet!"

Jupiter was the greatest of the gods, the same as the Greek Zeus.

Immediately a crash of thunder broke, and a star shot across the skies, leaving a great trail of light behind it.

"See, father," cried Æneas. "The gods are answering me. Will you not believe now that I can save you?"

Then the old man bowed to the star. "I grant it," he said. "The gods have spoken. Lead on. I will do whatever you bid me."

Æneas quickly gave his orders. It was not safe for all in the house to go together.

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There was more chance of escape for a few at a time.

"Make your way out of the city as best you can," Æneas told his servants. "We will all meet at the cypress-tree by the temple outside the gates."

Then he took Anchises on his shoulder, and held little Ascanius by the hand. Creusa followed. They stole out into the streets.

Most of the Greeks were still at the palace. The streets seemed empty. But just as they got near the gates, there was a sound of footsteps.

"Run, my son," cried Anchises. "They are pursuing us. I can see the swords flashing."

So Æneas ran, as quickly as he could with his double burden. They managed to reach the temple in safety.

But Æneas then found a new trouble. Creusa was not there! She must have lost them, or been so tired that she could not keep up in the last run for the gates.

Æneas insisted on going back to look for her, though every moment of delay was dangerous. He went boldly back to his own house, and all through the streets. He even looked in at the palace, where by this time the Greeks had heaped their plunder together, and were standing guard over rows of unhappy captives. But Creusa was nowhere to be seen.

"Creusa! Creusa!" cried Æneas. "Where are you?"



AENEAS MEETS THE SPIRIT OF HIS WIFE CREUSA.

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Then suddenly he saw her. She was no longer a woman, walking on the ground, but a spirit, gliding through the air. She smiled at him.

"Fear not, my husband," she said, "all is well with me. But it is the will of the gods that I should not go with you on your journey. You will travel for many days, and cross many seas. At the last you will come to the land where Tiber flows. There you shall wed a royal wife and found a great race."

Then Creusa vanished. Æneas went back, puzzled and troubled. All through the winter he lived hidden in the mountains, taking care of Anchises and Ascanius.

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Bawley

VIII

THE RIVAL GODDESSES

“Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with dark distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness ?”
TENNYSON.

WHEN spring came, Æneas set out on his search for the land to which the gods wanted him to go. He did not know that it was Italy. He trusted the gods would guide him. Perhaps when he reached the right place they would tell him so by some sign,

However, his journey was to be almost as long as that of Odysseus. For there were two goddesses quarrelling about him.

His own mother, the goddess Venus, was of course anxious that her son should reach Italy safely and prosper there. It was she who had sent the spirit of Creusa with the message.

On the other hand, Jupiter's wife, Juno, hated all Trojans. She did not want Æneas to succeed, and she did all she could to hinder him

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You may imagine the delays and confusions that came from the rivalry of these two.

Luckily Æneas knew nothing about it. He believed the gods were helping him. So he set out full of hope and courage.

By and by he and his friends came in sight of a land called Thrace. The people who lived there were friendly to the Trojans.

"This is the first land we have sighted," said Æneas. "Perhaps it is here that the gods would have me dwell."

So they went ashore and made all their preparations. And Æneas made ready to offer up a sacrifice to his mother, Venus, in thanksgiving.

He was anxious that everything should be done rightly. For the victim, he slew a fine white bull. Then he set up an altar on the hill-side.

He wanted fresh green leaves to cover the altar before he put the sacrifice upon it. Close by there were myrtle-trees growing. The sweet-scented leaves would serve his purpose splendidly.

So Æneas plucked a bough. To his horror, when he pulled it out drops of blood fell on the ground.

"What can this mean?" he asked himself. Then he plucked another, and the same thing happened.

"Surely I must be dreaming," he said to himself. "I will try just once more."

So a third time he pulled at a branch. This

time he started back in astonishment. For a cry of pain came from the myrtle-tree.

"Æneas, Æneas!" it said; "cannot you let me rest in my grave?"

"Who are you?" said Æneas, trembling.

"I am Polydorus," said the voice. "I was slain by many spears, which now are changed to green myrtle boughs. Flee, flee from this wicked land!"

Then Æneas remembered that Priam had sent one of his sons, Polydorus, as a messenger to the King of Thrace. No doubt when the king heard how Troy was burnt, and Priam dead, he had killed Polydorus for the sake of his money.

Æneas ran with the story to his father and his comrades. They all agreed with him that it would be best to heed the warning of Polydorus. A land where a son of the Trojan king had been murdered was no land for Trojans to stay in.

However, before they set sail, they made a great funeral mound in memory of Polydorus. As they went away, they called aloud, "Farewell, Polydorus!"

It was not easy to know where next to turn. "Let us go to the sacred isle of Delos," said Anchises. "There is the temple of the Sun-god. He will advise us."

In due course they reached Delos, landed, and went to the temple.

"Tell us, O great god," prayed Æneas,

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"where we may find a home and build a city."

Then the whole earth shook. The temple and the grove of bay-trees rocked. The Trojans fell awestruck to the ground. A voice rang out:

"Seek your ancient mother," it said. "Seek the land which first bare you: Thence shall you and your children, O Æneas, rule over many lands."

Now Æneas and his friends could not understand what this meant. So far as they knew, Troy was their motherland. Surely the god could not mean them to return there?

But old Anchises made a suggestion.

"I have heard that our forefathers came to Troy from Crete," he said. "Crete is not far away. With favouring winds we could be there in three days. Let us see whether that is the motherland which the god tells us to seek."

However, they fared no better in Crete than in Thrace. They began to build a city, and hoped to settle down. But everything went wrong. A plague raged, and many men died miserably. There was a blight on the crops. The water failed, and the grass was burnt up.

"Not yet have we found the promised land," said Anchises. "We must go back to Delos and pray for clearer guidance."

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So they made all ready to depart. Æneas lay down for his last night in Crete. They were to set out early next day.

Æneas had not been asleep very long when he woke with a start. The moonlight was streaming into the room. He could see the little figures of the household gods, which he had carried with him from Troy.

To his astonishment, however, they were moving and speaking.

"Listen, Æneas," he heard them say. "There is no need to go again to Delos. Here is the message which the Sun-god has for you. Long wanderings are yet before you. Crete was not the land of which he spoke. You must seek another land. Hesperia is its name. There shall you find rich soil, wheat and vine, flocks and herds, and many mighty warriors. There is your home, whence long ago you came."

Now Æneas was not quite sure whether he was asleep or awake. At any rate, he thought it best to tell the whole story to his father.

"Ah," said Anchises, "long ago I heard a prophetess speak of that land of Hesperia. Where it is I know not. But we must seek it, if such is the will of the gods."

So once more they set out on their travels. This time their journey was not pleasant. No doubt Juno was angry that they had found out the name of the land to which

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they were to go. At any rate, misfortunes dogged them. There came lightning, thunder, wind and rain. They were very thankful when at last they found a harbour and could get to dry land.

Now there were plenty of dangers in these pleasant islands, as Odysseus had found out. The Trojans knew nothing about his experience. They were delighted to see herds of oxen and goats, for they needed fresh meat. There were no men to be seen. They could kill and take as many beasts as they liked.

So they made a great feast by the seashore and were very merry. All at once, darkness fell, though it was quite broad daylight. At the same time there was a noise like the beating of many wings.

The Trojans sprang to their feet and looked all round for the cause of the strange noise. They had not long to wait. A whole drove of dreadful creatures called Harpies was bearing down on them.

They had wings and long claws like birds. But their faces were the faces of women. The cattle which the Trojans had taken belonged to them, and they were very angry at the theft.

At first the Trojans drew their swords and tried to kill them. It was no use at all, for the steel went right through the Harpies' bodies without hurting them. The Harpies screeched and swooped as much as ever.

The Trojans gave up the unequal fight and



THE DREADFUL HARPIES.

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made for their ships. One of the monsters perched on a high rock to watch them go.

"Ha, ha!" she said. "Did you think you could fight us? Did you think you could steal, unpunished, what is ours by right? I will tell you what will happen to you. You are seeking Italy. To Italy, in due time, you shall come. But first you shall fall into such want that hunger will drive you to eat the very tables from which you are dining."

Then she laughed, and spread her great wings and flew away.

The Trojans did not know what to make of her words. However, the time came later when they understood them, as you will see.

Meanwhile, they sailed on towards Italy, landing here and there, and meeting with many adventures. Among other places they landed on the island of the Cyclopes.

At first they thought it was uninhabited, just as Odysseus had done. But suddenly a man came creeping out of the woods. He ran towards them, and then dropped on his knees. He looked very miserable, and very frightened.

"Save me, save me!" he whispered. "You are Trojans, and I a Greek. Perchance you will wish to slay me, since I fought you at Troy. Be it so. Better to die at the hands of men than of monsters."

"Be at ease, stranger," said Æneas. "We will not harm you. Tell us what you mean."

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Then the Greek told them the story of Odysseus and the blinding of Polyphemus, which you have heard already.

"When the others escaped," he said, "I was left behind. They did not miss me till too late. For three months I have hidden myself in the woods. I had no food but berries and wild roots. Better to starve than to fall into the hands of the giants."

While the Greek was still speaking, the Trojans saw Polyphemus come striding across the island.

"He is but one," whispered the Greek. "There are hundreds like him."

Æneas made signs to the rest to make the boats ready as quickly and as quietly as possible. Then, taking the Greek with them, they embarked.

But the moment they began to row, Polyphemus heard theplash of the oars. He came stumbling towards them, shouting for help to his brother giants.

From all directions they came hurrying up. They would have made short work of the Trojans if they had caught them.

Luckily a strong north wind began to blow. The sails filled, and the ships sped along without the help of the oars. Soon the island faded in the distance. The Trojans were saved.

They sailed on for many days. Poor old Anchises was not to live to see the promised land. He died not very long after the encounter

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with the giants. So of the three who had left the house in Troy with Æneas, only one, little Ascanius, came with him safely to Italy.

For some time all went well. The Trojans knew they were not far from Hesperia now. They were already close to Southern Italy. A few more days' sailing would perhaps bring them to the haven they sought.

When Juno saw that in spite of her Venus was to have her way, she was furiously angry.

"Even now I can stop them," she said to herself. "They shall not reach Italy yet."

She hurried off to the island where the King of the Winds lived. You remember how the Greeks had let loose the winds from the bag in which they were tied. Now they were all imprisoned again, moaning and snarling behind locked doors.

"O great King of the Winds," said Juno, "grant me a boon. Enemies of mine are at sea. Loose your winds to destroy them."

The king could not refuse to oblige so great a goddess. He took his spear and drove in the door of the prison.

Immediately the winds rushed out. They lashed the waves to fury.

Æneas feared his last hour was come. More than one of the ships sank before his eyes. Several of his men were drowned. The ships which still floated were driven helplessly before the wind.

Now the god of the sea, Neptune, was far

THE RIVAL GODDESSSES

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from pleased at what had happened. He put out his head from the waves and saw the labouring ships.

"How dare the King of the Winds trouble my waves thus?" he muttered angrily. "Mine is the care of the sea, not his."

Then he commanded the winds to be still. They slunk back to their home in disgrace. He called out the sun, and smoothed the waves. Soon all was quiet again.

Æneas gave a sigh of relief. He counted the ships which were left to him, and repaired the damage done in the storm.

Yet Juno's wicked plan had not entirely failed. For the ships had been driven so far from land that Æneas no longer knew where to steer. Besides, his men were so exhausted and so griefstricken that he felt he must make for the nearest land, whatever it was.

Now it so happened that the storm had blown them towards the coast of Africa. By and by they found a fine harbour, with wooded cliffs sheltering it.

"We must put in here, my comrades," said Æneas. "Fear not. Though we have suffered so many sorrows, by and by we shall come to the promised haven. Meantime, let us rest. Perhaps from these cliffs we may be able to see some of the other ships, and meet our friends again."

So they landed, and rested for a time from their troubles.

IX

THE HAPPY ENDING

"Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please."

SPENSER.

WHILE Æneas was trying to make the best of his troubles in Africa, his mother Venus was pleading for him with Jupiter.

"You have forgotten your own promise, O father of gods and men," she cried reproachfully. "Who has persuaded you to change your purpose?"

"Nay, my daughter," answered Jupiter. "All shall go well. Your son shall come in due time to Italy. Even Juno herself shall lay aside her wrath."

Venus contented herself as best she could with this. Meanwhile she felt she must go herself to her son's rescue.

So when Æneas set out to explore the land, the first person he met was his own mother. She had disguised herself as a huntress, and carried a bow on her shoulders.

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"Welcome, stranger," she said to Æneas. "Tell me, have you met one of my sisters in the wood? Hounds are with her, and she carries a horn. We are chasing the boar."

"Nay, fair lady," answered Æneas. "I have seen no one. But can you tell me what land this is? We have been shipwrecked here."

"Dido is the queen of this land," answered Venus. "The name of her city is Carthage. Like you, she was a stranger, who came hither across the seas. She is still building her city. Its walls you may see even from here. But who are you, and whence do you come?"

"We are from Troy," said Æneas. "My name is Æneas. I set sail with twenty good ships, seeking Italy, as the gods bade me. Alas! of the twenty, but seven have come safely with me to this haven."

"The queen will aid you," said the goddess. "And as for your twenty ships, look above your head. Do you see those twenty swans, flying together? Now, look, an eagle has scattered them, and they are driven in all directions. There, already he is gone. They have met again. So will it be with your ships."

"So may it be, I truly pray," said Æneas. "Farewell. I will seek the queen."

Æneas and his friends hurried on towards the city, and soon entered its gates. Venus had cast a magic veil over them, so that they were invisible.

Inside the city all was busy. There were

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already fine walls and houses, but others were being built. In the middle was a temple to Juno. Æneas was delighted when he found in the carvings on its walls pictures of all that happened at Troy. He even saw a picture of himself.

While he was looking at these, Dido herself came into the temple. She was one of the loveliest women Æneas had ever seen. She sat down on a high throne, with her attendants round her.

Suddenly there was a noise of shouting. Everybody in the temple looked to see what was the matter. What was the surprise of Æneas to see several of the comrades whom he had given up for dead. Dido's people were bringing them to the queen.

Æneas could hardly resist speaking to them. However, he kept quiet, to see what would happen.

One of them told Dido the story of the shipwreck.

"We had a great king, named Æneas," he ended. "I know not whether he still lives or not. But I pray you, great queen, grant us leave to tarry here a little, till we find him, or till our ships are ready again for sea."

"Right gladly," said Dido. "Even we of Carthage have heard of the great deeds done at Troy. I will do all I can for you. Would that your king were here also!"

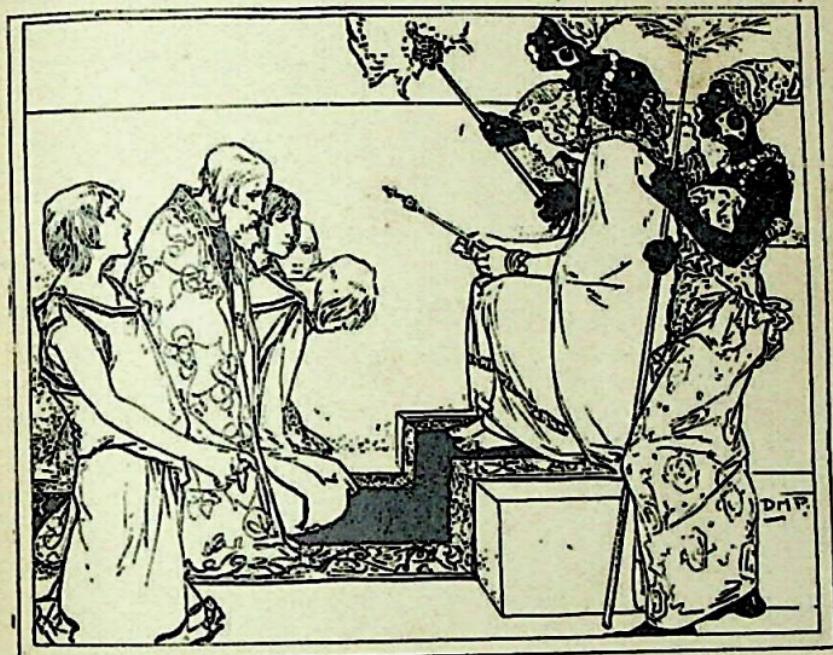
Then Venus swept the veil aside, and they all saw Æneas standing there.

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"I am here, great queen," he cried; "I am here, dear comrades."

Now it seemed as though all the troubles of the Trojans were at an end. Dido was full of kindness and hospitality. They were entertained in her palace, and given all they asked



THE SHIPWRECKED TROJANS TELL THEIR TALE
TO DIDO.

for. She was never tired of listening to the story of their adventures.

The only thing that Dido would not hear of was her friend leaving her. Aeneas felt uneasy, for he knew he must not stay in Carthage, happy though he was. Yet he

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dared not grieve Dido by telling her he was going.

He tried to slip away quietly without her knowing. Unluckily, she found out his plan, and was very angry. It seemed to her that he was ungrateful.

At last he made up his mind that he must be hardhearted, and go in spite of her. So one morning he sailed away. Poor Dido was left alone, very sad and unhappy. Æneas himself was mournful, for he would far rather have stayed at Carthage than set out on his search again. However, the will of the gods had to be obeyed.

So once more the Trojans were at sea, and facing danger and hardship. Many adventures, too long to tell here, befell them. One of the strangest things that happened was that Æneas was allowed to go down into the Underworld, Pluto's kingdom. There the spirit of his dead father advised him, and told him what was going to happen.

At last, after many wanderings they came in sight of a land covered with forest. Between the woods a great river rolled down to the sea. It was so sandy that it looked quite yellow. The dawn was just breaking, and many birds were flitting about and singing. Altogether, it was a pleasant sight for tired sailors.

The Trojans ran their ships ashore and landed. Then they sat down under the trees to have breakfast. They made cakes of dough to serve

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instead of plates. Each man had one, and piled his other food on it.

They were hungry, after their hard work on the ships. So when they had finished everything else, they ate up the cakes of dough as well.

"Why!" cried young Ascanius, "we're eating our tables!"

Some of the men laughed. But Æneas sprang up delighted.

"Rejoice, my comrades!" he said. "Hear what the boy says. Do you not remember the Harpy who mocked us? She said we should not reach the promised land till hunger drove us to eat the very tables from which we dined. Her words have come true. Surely this is the promised land. Our toils are over."

It was indeed true that they had reached Italy at last. The foaming yellow river was the Tiber.

Now the people who lived in those parts were called Latins, and their king Latinus. He had one daughter, Lavinia. She was to be married soon, to a great Latin prince, Turnus by name, who loved her dearly.

But lately King Latinus had begun to feel very troubled about the marriage. One strange thing happened after another, which made him think that the gods did not wish Lavinia to wed Turnus. At last one night he had a dream, and heard a voice speaking to him.

"Seek not to wed Lavinia to any Latin,"

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said the mysterious voice. "A bridegroom from over the seas is on his way to her."

Latinus told his family and his subjects about the dream. Turnus, of course, tried to persuade him to take no heed of it.

However, Latinus felt sure he had had a warning from the gods. He thought to himself, "If this bridegroom comes, I shall not be able to deny him. The gods have spoken."

Now it was not long after this that Æneas arrived. As soon as he was sure that he had reached Italy he sent some of his companions to seek out the king. They took beautiful presents with them.

When Latinus heard of the arrival he guessed who they were.

"You are men of Troy," he said to them; "that I know well. But why are you come to Italy? Did the storms drive you here, or have you wandered from your way? You are welcome here. We are Latins. I have heard men say that it was from this very place that Dardanus went forth to found your city of Troy."

"Ah, here is another proof that we have come to the promised land," whispered one Trojan to another. "Did not the Sun-god tell Æneas long ago that he was to seek the land that first bare the Trojans? Now we hear that this was indeed our motherland."

"We have not lost our way, great king," said the leader. "We came here of set pur-

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pose, obeying the will of the gods. All we ask of you is permission to settle here. We shall not be unworthy of your realm, or forget your kindness. Our King Æneas sends you these gifts, saved from burning Troy."

Latinus did not answer at first. He was thinking about his dream. This must be the fulfilment of it.

By and by he looked up, and spoke.

"Gladly I give you what you ask, O Trojans," he said, "and gladly I accept your presents. And bid Æneas himself come hither. The gods have told me one should come from across the seas who should wed my daughter and exalt our name in all the earth. Truly I believe it is Æneas of whom they spoke. The will of the gods be done."

When the messengers came back and told Æneas what Latinus had said he was full of delight.

Now all this time the rival goddesses had been watching what was happening. Venus was rejoicing over her son's success. Juno, on the other hand, could hardly contain herself for anger.

"These Trojans have cheated me of my revenge!" she cried. "They have come safely through the flames of the burning city, and walked unharmed among the spears of the enemy. I, Juno, greatest of goddesses, am defied by a mortal, this Æneas. Yet there is still one way for me. The gods above have failed me. I will go to the gods below."

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She hurried to Pluto's kingdom, and summoned to her a dreadful creature called Allecto. Allecto was so ugly and so wicked that Pluto himself shuddered when he looked at her. She was dressed in black. Instead of hair, live snakes darted and twisted about her head.

"Help me, daughter of darkness," said Juno. "I will not have Æneas wed Lavinia and make his home in Italy. They have welcomed him and made peace with him. Do you, the troubler of peace, drive them to anger and war."

A mischief-making errand of this kind was quite to Allecto's taste. She flew off at once to Italy.

First of all she entered the palace of Latinus, and sat down, invisible, beside Lavinia's mother, the queen. The queen was not very happy about the newcomer. She loved Turnus, and she loved Lavinia. It seemed hard they should be parting for a stranger whom no one knew much about.

"Good," thought Allecto. "Here is an ally for me. But we must sting her up to defy the king."

Then Allecto snatched one of the snakes from her hair and thrust it into the queen's bosom. The poor queen could neither see it nor feel it. But as it glided about it was poisoning and maddening her.

At first the queen spoke gently enough. "Why should you give our daughter to a

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stranger?" she said to Latinus. "As soon as a good wind blows, Æneas will take to the sea again, and carry Lavinia with him. We shall have lost our child for ever. Surely you will not break your word? Turnus had counted on your promise."

Latinus paid no attention to her words, nor even to her tears. Then the poison began to work more fiercely.

The poor queen ran out of the palace, quite mad. She called Lavinia to come with her, and some of the other women too. They rushed out of the city gates and into the forests.

"Come, women of the Latins," cried the queen; "come and sing the marriage song of Lavinia and Turnus!"

Allecto laughed, well pleased. She had made mischief enough there. Next she flew off to Turnus. This time she became visible, and took the shape of an old woman.

"Turnus," she said, "you are betrayed. The king is robbing you of your bride. A stranger is to inherit the land. Come, save yourself. Gather your men together and fight these strangers. Teach Latinus what it means to break a vow with Turnus."

Turnus only laughed.

"It is true enough," he said, "that there are strange ships in the river. But there is nothing to be alarmed about. You are getting old, good mother. You frighten yourself for nothing."

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"What!" screamed Allecto, "I am old, am I? I frighten myself for nothing, do I? Then look at this."

As she spoke, she took her own shape. Turnus stepped back, trembling. He had never seen anything so horrible. Allecto lashed at him with the live snakes, and flung her smoking torch at him. He became mad, like the queen.

"Bring me my arms!" he shouted. "We will drive these Trojan robbers out of the land."

Allecto flew away, laughing wickedly. This time she made for the woods. The boy Ascanius was hunting there.

Now among the wild beasts of the forest there was one tame stag which no hunter ever harmed. A young girl named Sylvia had found it, as a baby, deserted by its mother. She had nursed it and petted it and loved it dearly. Even now, when it was a great stag, it had not forgotten her. Every night it went home to her, after its day of wandering in the woods.

Allecto saw her chance of evil-doing. She led the hounds on the track of this very stag. Ascanius, of course, followed, and when he came in sight of the stag, he shot an arrow at it. The poor wounded creature turned and ran to Sylvia. She threw her arms round it and screamed for help. All the country-folk came running.

Ascanius of course had known nothing about Sylvia's pet. It was all through the wickedness of Allecto that he had been led to harm it.

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However, he had no time to explain or ask questions. Before he knew what was happening he found himself in the thick of a fight. The indignant shepherds thought no punishment too hard for one who had injured Silvia's stag.

Then Allecto flew away, chuckling, to Juno. "I have done what you bid," she said. "They are all at each other's throats now. You need not be afraid that Æneas will find things too easy."

She had indeed done her work. Æneas found he had to fight now for what Latinus at first had offered him so generously. For days the battle raged, and many brave men perished on both sides.

Yet at last the happy ending came. Lavinia and Æneas married, and ruled together over the promised land. They built a new city, and called it Lavinium, after the queen.

At last, when they had lived happily for a long time, a great darkness came down upon the earth one day.

When the skies cleared again, Æneas was nowhere to be seen. His mother Venus had carried him away. His troubles were all ended.

X

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

“Raging storm and raging flood
Alike have spared the prey,
And to-day the dead are living,
The lost are found to-day.”

MACAULAY.

AFTER Æneas had vanished, Ascanius ruled in his stead. All went so well that by and by the city of Lavinium was no longer big enough to hold all who wanted to live there. So Ascanius built a new city, which he called Alba Longa.

For three hundred years one king reigned after another in Alba, and all was peace and quiet. However, at the end of that time a quarrel arose.

The last king left two sons. The elder, whose name was Numitor, was very gentle and unselfish. The younger, Amulius, was proud and envious.

“It is not fair,” he said to Numitor, “that you should have all the good things, because you happen to be a little older than I am.”

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

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"Very well," said Numitor; "I must wear the crown, because it is my duty as the elder son. But you may have all the jewels and gold which our father left us."

Amulius was not satisfied even with this. As soon as he had got the treasure, he used it to bribe Numitor's subjects.

"I should make you a better king than he does," he said. "Help me to drive him out."

The plan succeeded. Numitor was forced to give up the crown. Now Amulius had all the dignity as well as all the treasure. His brother lived quietly in a little house, and did not interfere with him.

Still Amulius was not content. "My brother has children," he said to himself. "When they grow older, perhaps they will try to take the crown from me. I had better get rid of them before that can happen."

So Amulius had his brother's son put to death. The daughter, whose name was Silvia, was shut up in a temple.

"Now I am safe," thought Amulius. "I can do what I like."

However, the gods were watching, and were angry with Amulius for his greed and cruelty. One of the strongest of them, Mars, the great god of war, came down to earth to visit Silvia.

When he saw her, he was more indignant than ever.

"Poor soul!" he said to himself. "Amulius has imprisoned her here, far from the sight of

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men. But where men cannot go, a god may enter. This maiden shall wed a greater husband than Amulius expects."

So Mars married Silvia, and by and by beautiful twin sons were born to them. Silvia was full of delight in her babies.

When the news was carried to Amulius, he was beside himself with rage.

"Take the girl to prison," he ordered. "As for the children, you can throw them into the Tiber."

Now Amulius was so powerful that his servants dared not disobey him. Though Silvia wept and begged them not to take away her children, they would not listen. She was dragged off to prison, and the babies were carried to the river.

There had been heavy rain. The Tiber was in flood and roaring angrily. The dark water looked terrible.

The servants stopped on the bank and looked at the stream. As for the twins, they knew so little what was to happen to them that they laughed and crowded in the men's arms.

"What a shame it is!" said one servant.
"Why should we drown such lovely children?"

"The king must be obeyed," answered the other, shaking his head sadly.

"Well, I will obey him," said the first. "Still, they shall have one chance."

He hastily made a little basket out of the reeds which grew close by. Then he laid the

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

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babies in the basket, and pushed it gently off upon the water.

"There," he said ; "we have put them in the Tiber, as we were told. Yet if the gods are good, they may live."

Then the servants went back and told the king that his orders had been obeyed.

Meantime the basket sailed down the flood like a boat. By and by the waves threw it ashore, under a wild fig-tree, at the foot of a hill called Mount Palatine. Here, entangled among the branches, it remained safely. After a time the floods went down, the river sank lower, and the basket was left high and dry.

Now Mount Palatine was a lonely and deserted place. Wild beasts roamed about it, and the only human beings there were a few shepherds who came to look after their flocks.

So when after a time the babies began to cry, there was no man or woman to hear them. But the noise roused something else.

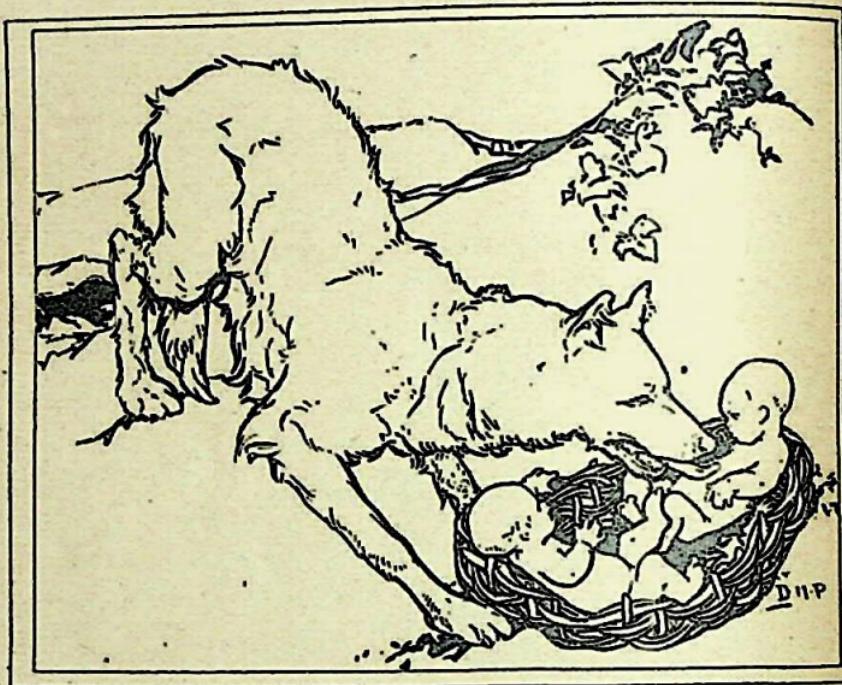
Down through the forest came a lean and hungry wolf, sniffing the air as she came. She had lost her cubs, and was full of misery and anger. She soon found the basket and the babies.

Perhaps she had never seen a human baby before. At any rate she was as pleased as a child with a new toy.. She did not harm them or hurt them in any way. She licked them over with her soft tongue, drew them to the warmth of her body, fed them like she used to feed her own cubs.

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The babies soon stopped crying. They had found a new mother. Every day they grew bigger and bonnier. The wolf watched her nurslings very proudly.

Mars saw what had happened, and vowed that the wolf should be rewarded for her



THE WOLF FINDS ROMULUS AND REMUS.

goodness. Lest she should not be able to find the food they wanted, Mars sent his sacred birds, the woodpeckers, to carry dainties to the children. No one came near to disturb them.

However, there was a shepherd who used to come to the hill to tend his flocks. He

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

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noticed how the birds went in and out, and began to think it strange.

One day, when the wolf was off hunting, he explored the thicket out of which he had seen her come. He was astonished to find the two baby-boys. He had not the least idea who they could be.

When the wolf came back, she found her nurslings had vanished. At first she was very troubled, and ran about looking for them and crying for them. But by and by she found out where they were, and was contented again.

The shepherd had carried them home to his wife, who was delighted to see them. She named them Romulus and Remus. Now that they were getting older, they were better with her than with their wolf-mother. They learnt men's ways, and how to talk, and many useful things.

For years Romulus and Remus lived in the shepherd's hut and helped him to guard his flocks.

Now, strangely enough, the shepherd was in the employment of King Amulius. He had adopted the very children his master wanted to destroy.

Near by there was another hill, called Mount Aventine. Sheep and cattle belonging to Numitor were kept there. Because Numitor had been so much ill-used by Amulius, his herdsmen were always quarrelling with the herdsmen on Mount Palatine.

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One day the shepherds of Mount Palatine were having a holiday. They had forgotten about their enemies on the next hill. Numitor's herdsmen seized the chance and attacked them. As luck would have it, they managed to take Remus prisoner. They carried him off to their master, Numitor.

The moment Numitor saw the boy, he was struck with the likeness to Silvia.

"Who are you, my son?" he asked. "Your face calls to mind one very dear to me."

"My name is Remus," answered the lad.

"Whence do you come, and who are your parents?"

"My father is a herdsman to King Amulius. He dwells on the neighbouring hill."

"Nay," said Numitor. "Your father is no herdsman. You have the bearing of a prince."

Then Remus told the kind old man the whole story. Putting two and two together, Numitor began to understand what had happened. He clasped the boy in his arms.

"You are my own grandson," he cried joyfully. "How good the gods have been to save you to us all!"

Meantime Romulus had missed his brother and come to seek him. Numitor lived in Alba Longa, where Amulius ruled, so that the news of the discovery of Remus was soon carried to the king.

When Romulus appeared, therefore, Amulius wanted to keep him out of the city at all costs.

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

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It would never do to have two princes, raised from the dead, coming to claim their own.

However, the gods were on the side of Romulus. After some fighting, the city gates were burst open, and wicked King Amulius was slain.

Romulus soon found his brother and his grandfather.

"You shall be king again in Alba, sire," cried the twins. They led Numitor to the throne and seated him upon it. All the people shouted for joy.

"Where is our mother, good people?" cried Romulus. "Lead us to her prison."

Every one was eager to show the way. In a very few minutes the twins had burst into the prison, flung the doors wide, and cast themselves into their mother's arms. Silvia could hardly believe her eyes. All the years of sorrow seemed blotted out in a moment. Here were her sons, alive and well. What did the past matter?

In some ways this would be the pleasantest point at which to end the story of Romulus and Remus. Their *greatest* days were still to come, but their *happiest* days were over.

The truth was that Romulus was much the cleverer of the two. He was generous to his brother, but Remus was not content with that. He began to be jealous, and to sulk because Romulus prospered so well.

The two princes, now that they knew who they were, felt that they must take their kingly

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rank. They could not go on running wild upon the mountains. Yet they did not want to rival or displace their grandfather. The only thing to be done was to found a new city.

"Let us build a city on Mount Palatine," said Romulus. "It is our old home, and should bring us good fortune."

"Nay," said Remus, "Mount Aventine is far better."

"Why not let the gods settle it for you?" said wise old Numitor.

"How may that be?" said the twins.

"Go each of you to his chosen hill," answered the king. "If you watch the whole night through, surely the gods will send some sign."

They agreed to do so. All through the long hours of one dark night they watched, each on his hill-top.

Remus, of course, had gone to the Aventine. As the night wore on, he began to get angry and disappointed.

"The gods will not speak to me," he muttered.

However, just as dawn was tinting the sky he saw some birds flying towards him. When they came nearer, he saw they were six great vultures. They flew solemnly on, over his head and away westward.

"A sign! a sign!" shouted Remus, dancing for joy. "The vultures are the sacred birds of the gods. They have flown here to bless my choice. The city shall be here."

THE WOLF'S NURSLINGS

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He ran swiftly down the hill-side to carry the news.

However, before he had got to the bottom he met a messenger sent by Romulus.

"The gods have chosen Mount Palatine," said the servant. "Your brother bids me tell you that twelve great vultures, the birds of the gods, have but now flown towards the hill."

Remus was bitterly disappointed. He could not deny that twelve vultures were more than six. Still, he thought perhaps his six had appeared earlier than the others. At any rate, he did not want Romulus to have his way.

The two brothers disputed for some time. Then at last they angrily decided that they could not both rule. The people must choose between them.

"Whom will you have for your king?" they asked, turning to the crowds watching them.

"Romulus! Romulus!" was the answer.

Remus walked sulkily away. From this day onward he hated his brother.

Romulus meantime set to work. Soon the foundations of the city were laid, and the wall which was to surround it began to rise, little by little.

All through the preparations Remus did nothing but sneer. He watched all that went on, and made mock of it.

The wall took some time to make, and Remus chose to jeer at the workmen for their slowness.

One day he was standing looking on as usual.

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The wall was not very high yet. Suddenly Remus jumped across it.

"This is a fine wall of yours, isn't it?" he said. "Are you going to keep enemies out with a wall I can jump over like this?"

The workmen were so angry at this, the last of a number of such sneers, that they fell upon Remus and killed him.

Romulus was left alone to carry on his city. By and by all was finished, and the houses built. Below the walls flowed the Tiber, which would carry ships and merchandise to the sea. The strong defences would keep the city safe from its enemies. Romulus looked at his new home with great pleasure.

"We will call it Rome," he said.

That name became so great, as years went on, that there was hardly a nation in the world that did not reverence it. The city of Romulus was to become the head of one of the mightiest empires men have ever seen.

XI

THE TALE OF THE TARQUINS

“Come, make a circle round me, and mark my tale with care,
A tale of what Rome once hath borne, of what Rome yet may bear.”

MACAULAY.

ONE king after another ruled over Rome, and the city became more and more prosperous. All the dwellers round about wondered at it. They began to think that if a man wanted to make his fortune he had better go to Rome.

Now not very far away from Rome there was a race of people called the Etruscans. They were quite different to look at from the Romans. The Romans were slender and well made. The Etruscans were sturdy and thick-set, with big heads. They were very clever at building and at sailing.

A certain Etruscan lady married a stranger from far away. To her disgust, she found that the Etruscans would not let her husband share in their fortunes, because he was a foreigner.

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So when their son grew up, she advised him to leave home and see what he could get in Rome.

So Lucius Tarquinius, or Tarquin, as we sometimes shorten it, said good-bye to his friends and set out to make his fortune. He was a clever youth, and the Roman king was glad to have his services. He honoured him in all sorts of ways, and at last, when he felt himself near to death, left his young sons in Tarquin's care.

"I know you will watch over them for me," he said, "till they are old enough to rule alone."

"Surely I will," said Tarquin. "Do I not owe everything to you, dear master?"

Yet the breath was hardly out of the king's body before Tarquin broke his promise. He first of all persuaded the young princes to go out hunting. Then he appealed to the people, and told them that he himself was a much better king than these lads who had gone off seeking their own pleasures.

The heirs came back to the city to find King Tarquin enthroned and their kingdom taken from them.

Tarquin was right about one thing. He certainly knew how to rule. He took a great pride in Rome, and was never tired of making plans to improve the city. Rome owed a good deal to him.

As Tarquin grew older, he began to be puzzled about what was to happen after his

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death. He did not want the young princes to have their way after all. Yet he did not feel that his own sons were fit for the work.

There was a little boy who worked in the palace, whose name was Servius Tullius. One



THE CHILD WHOM THE FIRE COULD NOT HURT.

day he was so tired that he lay down in one of the doorways and fell fast asleep.

By and by the queen came out to walk in the grounds. She saw a bright light in one of the doorways, and went to see what it was. There lay the little boy, asleep, and wrapped in flame. The fire flickered all over him, with-

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out hurting or rousing him. There was no smell of burning.

The queen was astonished.

"Surely this is the child of the gods," she said. "No mortal could bear the fire like this."

She ran to fetch her husband.

"This is a sign from the gods," he said. "We will take this child to be our son. We will teach him kingship, and he shall rule after me."

Now when the princes heard that a little servant-boy was to be made king, they were very jealous. They watched for an opportunity to kill Tarquin and seize the throne.

By and by they hired two men, dressed up as shepherds, to get into Tarquin's presence and kill him. One of them kept the king talking, while the other stole behind him and struck him down.

However, they got nothing by their trick. As soon as the queen saw the deed, she ordered the gates of the palace to be shut fast. She herself went to one of the windows and spoke to the crowd outside.

"Your king is ill," she said ; "till he recovers, he bids you obey Servius."

The people were quite satisfied. By the time they found out that Tarquin was dead, they had grown used to Servius and did not wish to make any change.

Servius reigned wisely and well for many

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years. He married his two daughters to the two sons of Tarquin.

Now the daughters of Servius were not at all like each other. One of them was very sweet and gentle, the other bad-tempered and cruel. In the same way, one of Tarquin's sons was proud, the other good-natured.

Servius thought it would never do to have a marriage between the two who were both strong-willed. So Tarquin the Proud, named after his father, was wedded to the gentle girl : while Tullia was given to the good-natured brother.

The plan did not succeed. Tullia despised her husband ; Tarquin scorned his wife. They plotted together, and freed themselves by murder. Then they married.

Tullia and Tarquin now began to long for more power.

"Servius is a weak old man," whispered Tullia. "Why should we wait for his death?"

Tarquin let himself be persuaded very easily. One day when Servius came into his palace he found Tarquin sitting on his throne. When he rebuked him, Tarquin abused him, drove him out of the house, and sent armed men after him to slay him as he fled. Tullia, hurrying to congratulate her husband, drove right over her father's body as it lay in the street.

Now Tarquin the Proud was not, like his father, a good ruler. He only wanted to be king for his own selfish reasons. The people

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soon saw that, and hated him. Still, they had to bear with him for the time being. He was too strong for them.

Tarquin the Proud had several sons, Titus and Aruns and Sextus. They were no better than their father was. Sextus especially was treacherous and wicked.

Though Tarquin's throne seemed safe, a guilty conscience made him ill at ease. In the night-time, when he could not sleep, he thought of the crimes he had committed. It seemed to him the gods must punish him some day. He was quite right about that.

At last Tarquin thought he would consult the famous oracle of Delphi, in Greece. This oracle was at a very lonely spot among the mountains. There were strange cracks in the rocks, out of which vapour rose. A priestess used to sit by one of these openings in the earth and answer questions. Men sent from all over the world to hear what the oracle would say.

Tarquin sent two of his sons, Titus and Aruns, and their cousin, a young man who was supposed to be very stupid. Men called him Brutus, which means The Stupid One.

It was usual to give presents to the priestess. Titus and Aruns took costly gifts. Brutus had only a wooden staff.

"That's a fine present for the gods," said his cousins, mocking. "Could you find nothing better?"

However, perhaps it was not such a poor

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present after all. The staff was hollow, and packed tight with gold.

When they had offered their gifts, the king's sons asked their question. They told the priestess that their father had been very uneasy of late, and feared some trouble was hanging over him. Could the priestess tell them if this was so ?

"Yea," said the priestess grimly ; "the fall of Tarquin is soon to come."

Titus and Aruns looked at each other startled.

"We are the next heirs," they said. "Tell us, which of us will reign after him ?"

"He who shall be the first to kiss his mother," answered the priestess.

Titus and Aruns at once began to quarrel as to which of them had the right to be first in kissing the queen when they returned. In the end they agreed to cast lots.

Meantime, Brutus had pretended to lose his footing on the rough ground. He fell full length, and picked himself up again clumsily. However, before he did so he had secretly kissed the ground.

"Earth is the mother of us all," he said to himself. "Perhaps I am first in the kissing."

When the young men returned home, they found that Tarquin was besieging a neighbouring town. All the king's sons and all the young nobles, of course, joined in the siege.

One night they were sitting round the camp fire talking. Aruns and Titus and Sextus were all there, with another cousin whose name was

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Collatinus. Somehow or other they began to talk about their wives. The king's sons were sure their wives were better than any one else's. Collatinus said they might be very good women, but they could not be so diligent and gentle and modest as his own wife, Lucretia.

"Let us settle it by seeing for ourselves," he said at last. "Come, they are none of them expecting us. Rome is not far away. Let us ride in and see what they are doing."

They carried out their plan, and the king's sons were forced to admit that Collatinus was right. Their own wives were dancing and enjoying themselves, and not thinking at all of their absent husbands. Lucretia was sitting quietly weaving at her loom, with her maidens round her.

Now the worst of all this was that Sextus admired Lucretia so much, once he had seen her, that he could think about nothing else. He no longer cared for his own wife.

As soon as he got a chance he rode to Rome again, this time quite alone. Lucretia was glad to see him, for her husband's sake, and welcomed him hospitably.

She was horrified when she found that he wanted to carry her off. Nothing that he could say would persuade her, however. At last he rode angrily away.

As soon as he had gone Lucretia sent for her father and her husband, and begged them to revenge her. She was so troubled by what had

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happened that when she had finished her tale she drove a dagger into her own heart.

Collatinus had brought with him his friend Brutus. Brutus stooped down and drew the dagger gently out.

"I will avenge this innocent blood," he vowed, "upon Tarquin and all his race."

Then they carried Lucretia's body to the market-place, and called the people to see it and to listen to their story. Soon they had quite a large following of excited people.

They hurried to the camp and seized the king's sons. Tarquin himself tried to take refuge in Rome, but the gates were flung together in his face. He fled from the country.

"We will have no more kings in the city," cried the people. "No man alone shall wield the sovereign power."

So they chose two leaders, who were to be called consuls. One was Brutus, the other was Collatinus. The Tarquins ruled no more.

But from that day onward, once every year, the people gathered together to rejoice as at a great feast. And they called that day the feast of the Driving-Forth of the Kings.

XII

THE ENEMY AT THE GATES

“For Romans in Rome’s quarrels
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son, nor wife, nor limb, nor life,
In the brave days of old.”

MACAULAY.

AFTER Tarquin the Proud had been turned out of Rome, his one idea was to get back again. He was not content with his good luck in being alive and safe. He wanted to be a king, and to be treated with all the honour to which he was accustomed. He made out that the Romans had treated him very badly.

Now there was a very powerful Etruscan leader, named Lars Porsenna. Porsenna listened to Tarquin’s grumbling and lamenting, and felt sorry for him. He offered to help him. So Tarquin and Porsenna marched on Rome with a great army.

Now, of course, from the hill the citizens of Rome could see a long way over the plain. They soon spied the flash of the sun on the

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armour, and saw the cloud of dust raised by the marching troops. They guessed at once that it was Tarquin, coming to force himself upon them again.

They made all ready as quickly as they could. They sharpened up their weapons and set men on guard. They brought the cows and sheep from the fields outside the city walls, lest the enemy should kill them. They closed all the gates.

Now the city of Rome itself, on its hills, was on the other side of the Tiber from the attacking force. A bridge made of wood crossed the river, which was too broad and too swift for an army to pass easily. Then on the same side of the river as the enemy, in front of the bridge, was a fortress, called Janiculum.

The bravest of the Romans waited in Janiculum for the invaders. They wanted to fight them there, so as to keep them away from the bridge.

There was a great struggle when Porsenna and his army arrived. They were too many for the guards in Janiculum. Soon the Etruscans had broken into the fortress, and many of the Romans were slain. Some managed to escape, and to run to the bridge. The Etruscans followed.

This was a terrible state of affairs. What was to be done next?

Then a brave Roman named Horatius stepped forward and spoke to the consul.

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"We must cut down the bridge, sire," he said. "Look, it is so narrow that only three men can stand on it abreast. Three Roman soldiers standing at the farther end could bar the way for a whole army. While they held back the enemy, the others could smash down the bridge."

"True," said the consul. "If we could keep them back till we destroyed the bridge, all would be well. But where could I find three men to stand alone to fight a thousand foes?"

"Here am I, for one," said Horatius. Then he turned to the crowd standing round and shouted :

"Who will stand on either hand to keep the bridge with me?"

Two volunteers dashed forward in a moment. The consul need not have doubted where he should find three men ready to face death for their country.

The three Romans seized their arms and ran to the farther end of the bridge. The rest got axes and hammers, and began to rain down blows upon the wooden supports of the bridge.

When Lars Porsenna saw the three come forward to face his whole army, he laughed aloud.

"We will make short work of them," he thought; "long before their friends can cut down the bridge, the three will be killed and we shall have crossed."

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But Porsenna was wrong. One after another the bravest of the Etruscan host fought with the three. One by one they were vanquished. The three, weary, and bloodstained and wounded, never faltered. Meanwhile the bridge was beginning to tremble. Any moment it might break.

"Come back! come back!" shouted the Romans.

Two of the Romans darted quickly back across the bridge. They had scarcely stepped off it when, with a great crash, it fell. A shout of joy went up from one side, a yell of anger from the other.

For one moment both armies were so busy looking at the bridge that they did not notice that one of the three had not obeyed the call. All at once they understood. Horatius had scorned to leave his post as long as one timber of the bridge remained. Now he stood alone, the roaring water between him and his friends.

The Etruscans shouted aloud. "Down with him!" cried some. "Yield, yield!" said Porsenna.

Horatius was so little afraid of death that he actually turned his back upon the thousands of his enemies. He looked across the river.

On the bank were his friends, watching anxiously. Behind them rose the city walls, and the roofs within. High up on the hillside a white patch gleamed in the sunlight. That was the porch of his own house.

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"Father Tiber," cried Horatius, "I pray to you. Take the life and the arms of your son into your keeping."

Then before any one knew what he was going to do, he had leapt into the river. It was taking a dreadful risk, for he was wounded, and weighed down with his armour. Yet Father Tiber heard his prayer. It was not long before Horatius stood safe on the other bank.

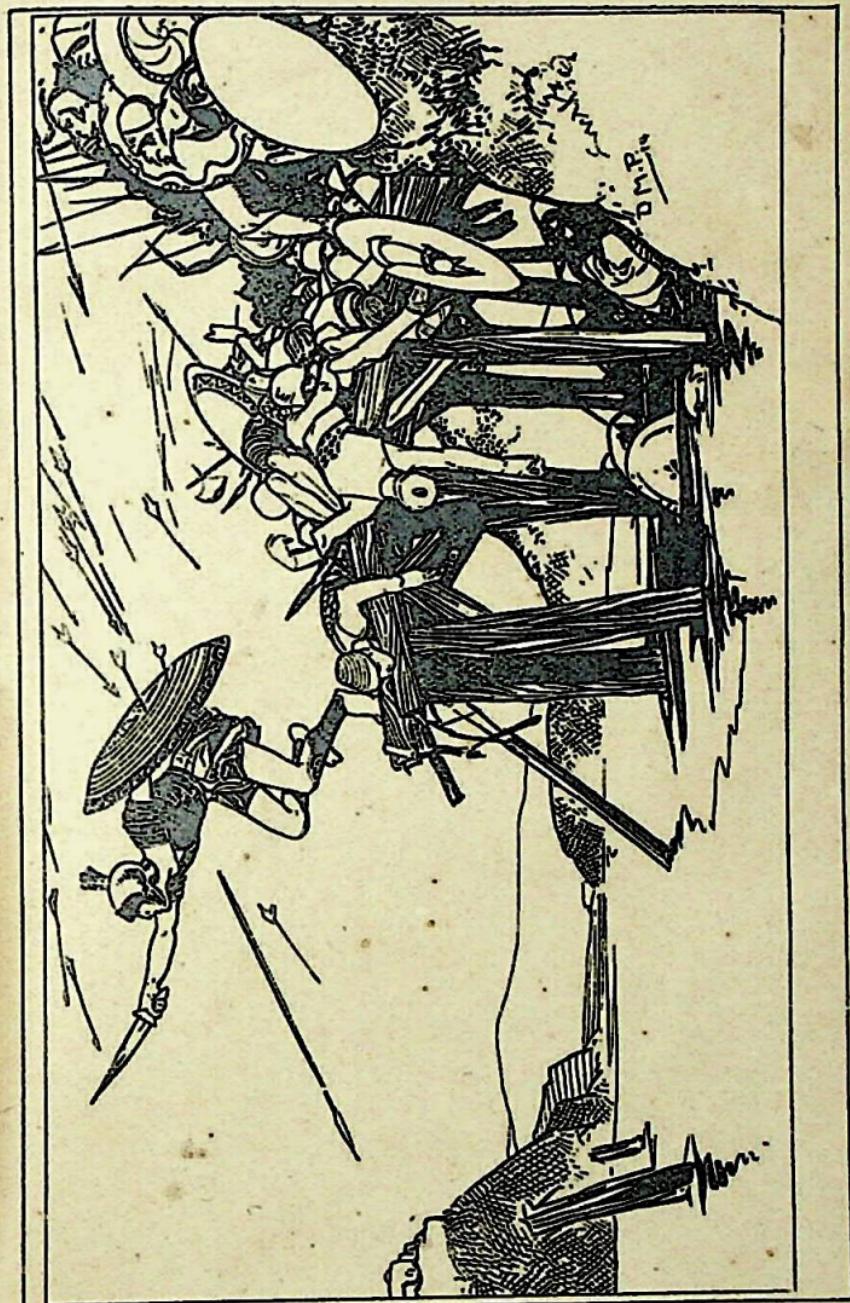
The Romans were delighted and the Etruscans very much disappointed. Lars Porsenna himself, however, could not help admiring Horatius, even though he was an enemy. Still, Porsenna felt he must keep his promise to Tarquin. So he settled down to besiege the city.

For some time this went on. The Etruscans could not get into the city, but the Romans could not get out. Food began to run short, and there was great distress in Rome.

A certain young Roman noble, whose name was Gaius Mucius, determined to find a way of escape. He felt sure that if Lars Porsenna himself were killed the Etruscans would go away. So he planned to steal into the Etruscan camp to slay the great leader.

He disguised himself and got safely into the Etruscan camp. Soon he saw all the soldiers crowding round a throne, on which there sat a man dressed in a purple robe.

"This must be their king," thought Mucius. "He is dressed in purple, the royal colour."



HORATIUS LEAPS FROM THE BRIDGE.

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So he flung himself upon the man and stabbed him.

However, the man in the purple robe was not Porsenna at all, but his treasurer. The Etruscans seized Mucius at once, and dragged him off to the king.

"Who are you?" asked Porsenna. "Why did you do this deed?"

Mucius would not speak a word. Porsenna was angry at his obstinacy.

"If you will not speak of your own accord," he said, "you must be made to. We will see whether torture will loosen your tongue."

Then Mucius did speak, but what he said surprised the king.

"Do you think to force a Roman by pain to betray his city?" he said, laughing. "Nay, I will show you how Romans can bear pain."

There was a fire burning close beside him. As he spoke, Mucius put his right hand into the flames, and held it there without wincing till it was utterly consumed.

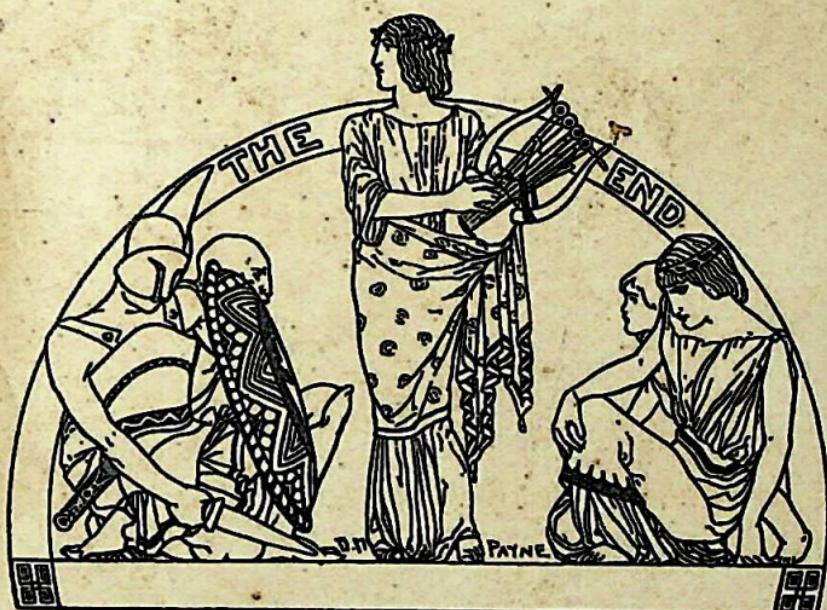
"In truth," cried Porsenna, "you Romans do not know what fear is. I will not misuse a noble foe. Go in peace; I ask to know no more."

"Sire," said Mucius, "for your courtesy I will tell you this. I am but one of three hundred Roman youths who have sworn to take your life. For myself, I have failed, and this right hand of mind can never harm a man again. But there are others, and, sooner

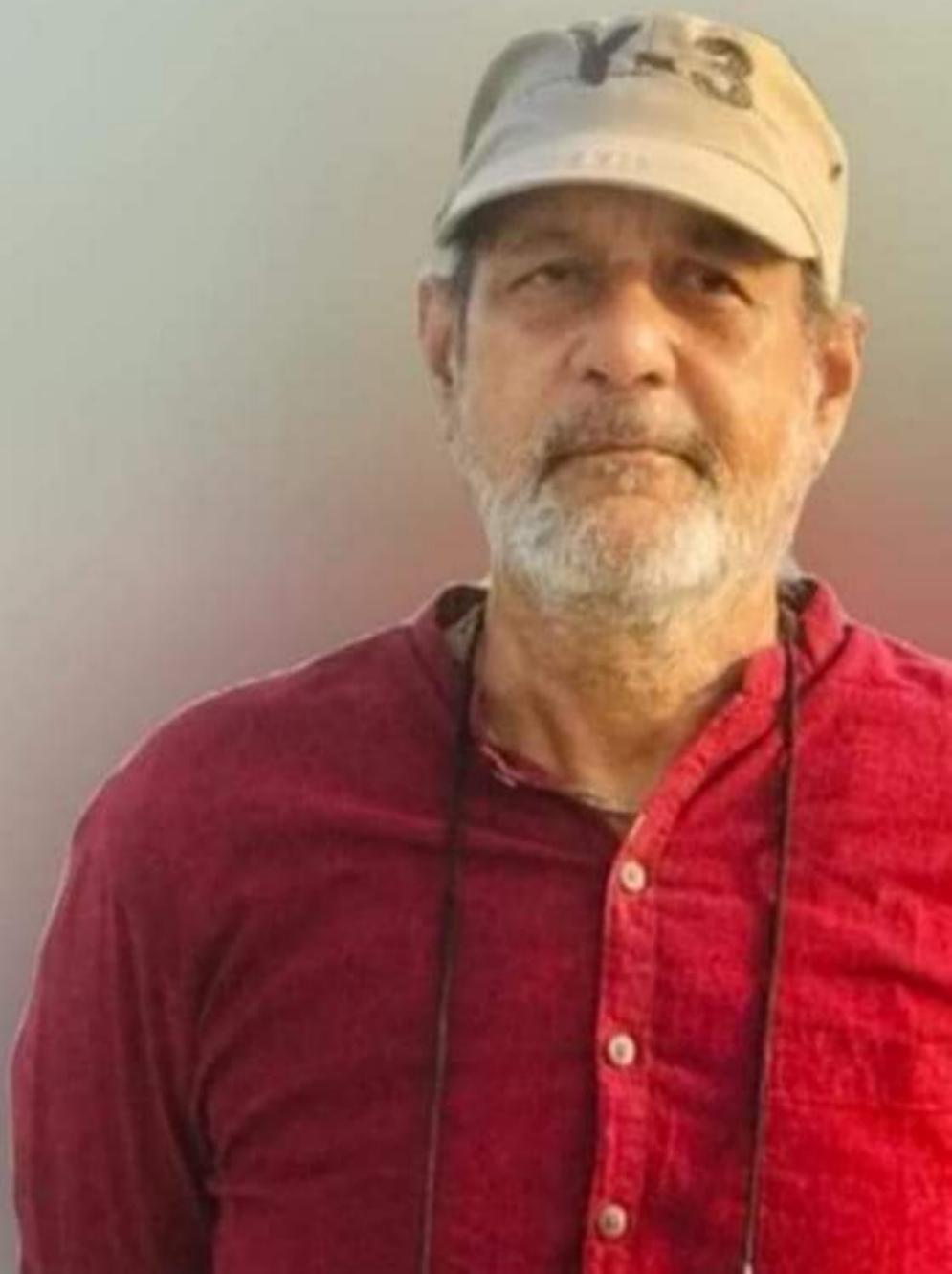
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In the end he decided to let the children go free, and to ally himself with the Romans. They were such noble enemies, he thought, that they were worth having as friends.

So the Romans and Etruscans made friends, and exchanged presents with each other. As for Tarquin, he went off to try to find someone else to help him. But he failed again, and died an exile, far away.



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